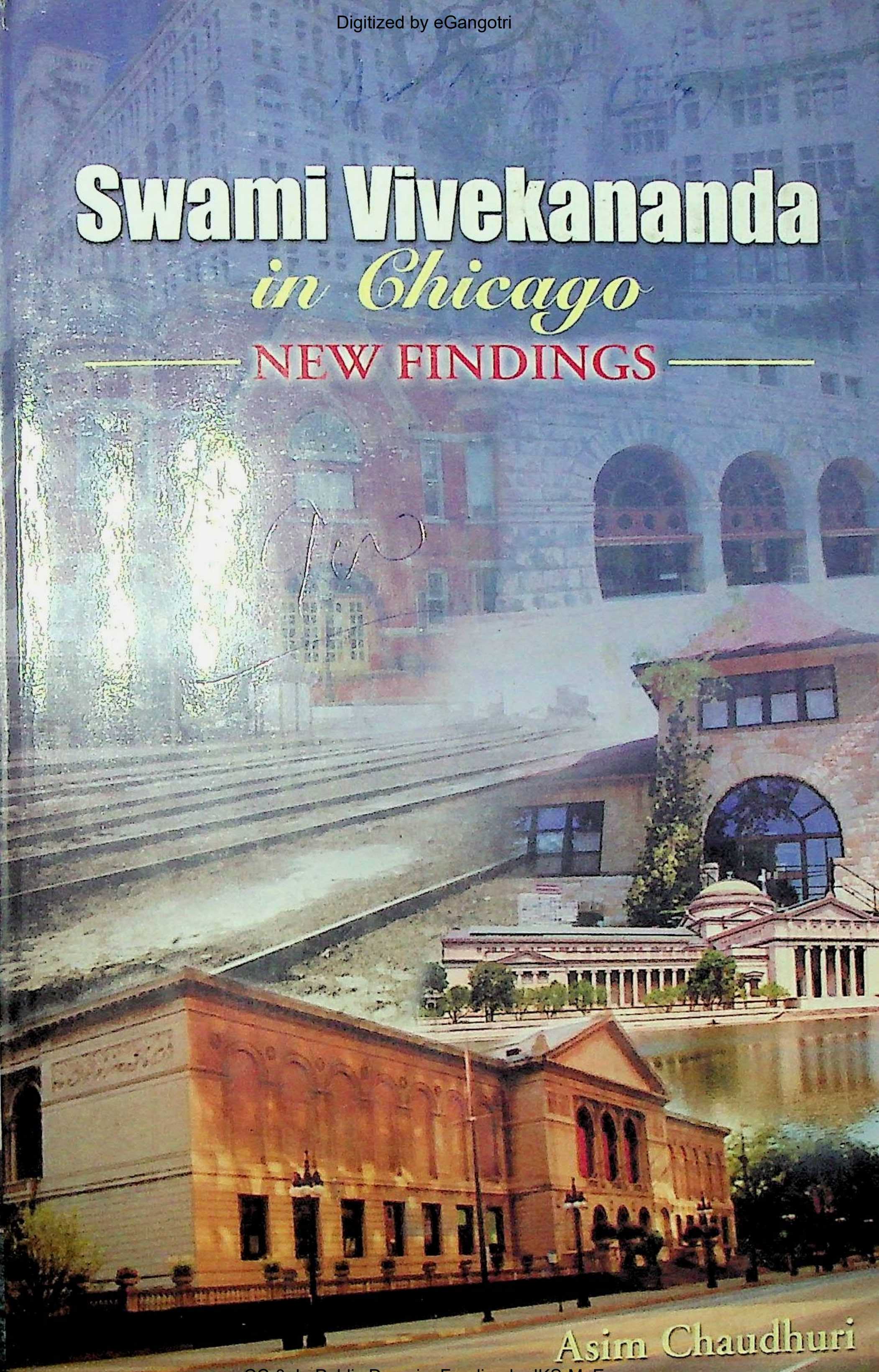
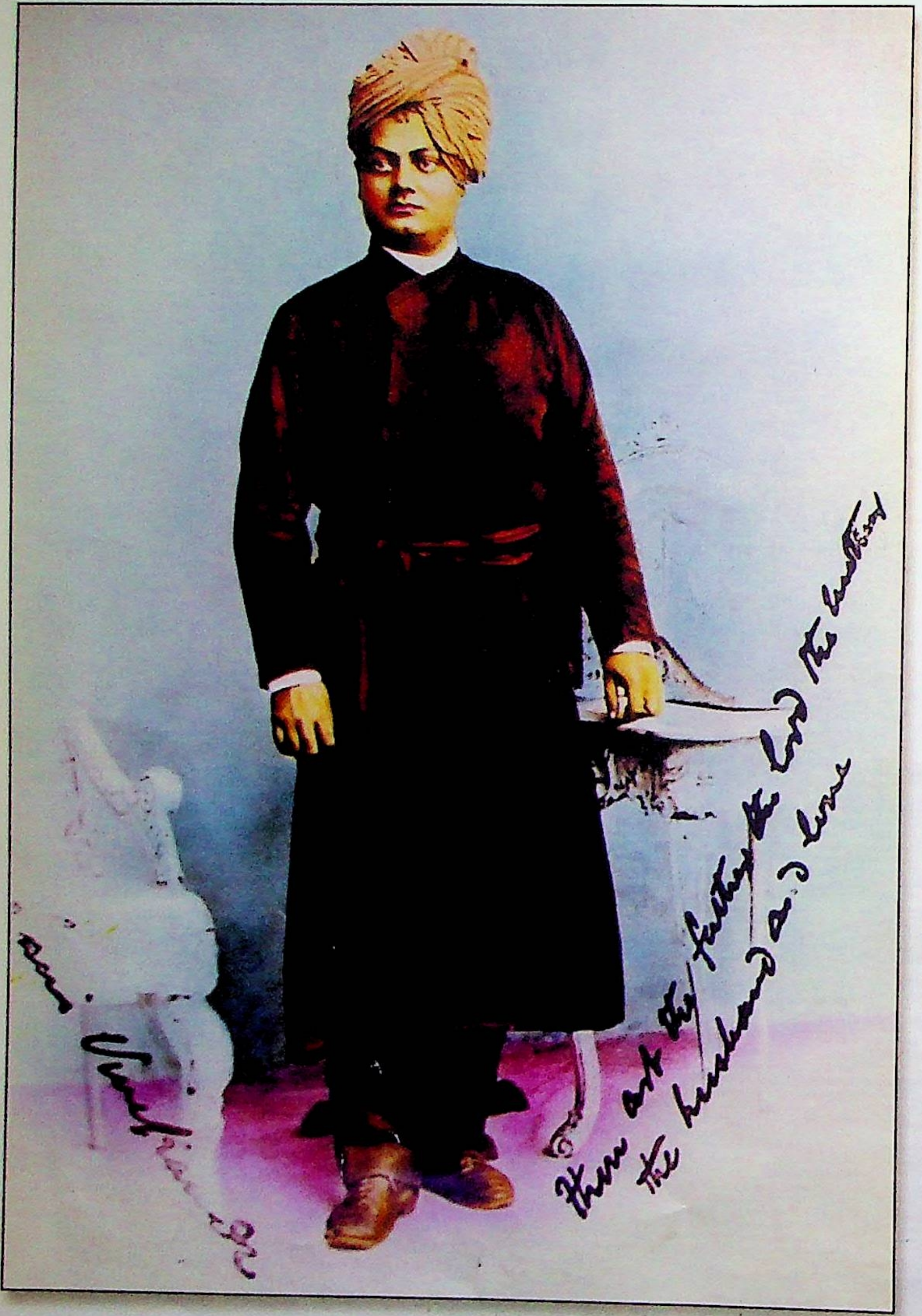
Swami Vivekananda

in Chicago

NEW FINDINGS



Asim Chaudhuri


Thou art the father the Lord the mother
the husband and love
Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda, Chicago, *ca.* 1893

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN CHICAGO

NEW FINDINGS

Entered Sh

Asim Chaudhuri

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This book is dedicated to the loving memories of

My dear parents and brother

All of them passed away
before they could see it with their mortal eyes.

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

The original four volumes of *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* by His Eastern and Western Disciples, were first published in 1912, 1913, 1915, and 1918 respectively based on well-known events of the Swami's life as well as on his principal talks and lectures only. Since then, more and more relevant incidents, and more and more lectures, discourses and notes of his talks have come to light, further illuminating the great personality of Swami Vivekananda. A wealth of new facts with regard to the Swami's life in the West and his speeches and talks have been unearthed since the publication began in 1958 of the six-volume work by Gargi (Marie Louise Burke), *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*. In India, during the years 1975-1988, Professor Shankari Prasad Basu, the second most famous Vivekananda researcher, brought to light many hitherto unknown facts of Swami Vivekananda's life in India—both before his departure for the U.S.A. and after his return from the West. These were published in his Sahitya Academy Award winning Bengali book, *Swami Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatbarsha* (in seven volumes), which is another landmark in the comprehensive biographical literature of Swami Vivekananda.

Readers will be very happy to see that even after the exhaustive research of the above-mentioned scholars, Mr. Asim Chaudhuri, now living in the U.S.A., has found it possible to discover some new facts regarding Chicago during Swami Vivekananda's time and his life in that city. Using our present knowledge of Swamiji as his foundation, the author has presented in his fascinating style his discoveries in this book, *Swami Vivekananda In Chicago: New Findings*.

The universal mind of Swami Vivekananda accepted only Truth as his God and the universe as his country. 'Doubtless I do love India,' he said, 'But every day my sight grows clearer. What is India or England or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN.' At heart Vivekananda was a bold Nitya-Mukta, or ever-free sannyasin, whom no home could hold, whose mind ever longed for the limitless sky as his only roof and grass as his only bed, as he said in his 'Song of the Sannyasin'. Nonetheless, the Hale family of Chicago took him inside their home from a chilly Chicago Street, and gave him food, shelter and all help whenever necessary throughout the period of his stay in America. Their home, for all practical purposes, was to the Swami while he was in the West his headquarters, his Math, his home, all rolled into one. So we think that the author's depiction of Chicago as Swami Vivekananda's (Western) home away from (his Eastern) home will be appreciated by the readers.

A significant service to the readers has been done by the author, perhaps unknowingly, through this book. While presenting excerpts from contemporary newspapers and also accounts of eyewitnesses, he has reinforced his reader's previous knowledge—based on *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* by His Eastern and Western Disciples—that Swami Vivekananda created an extraordinary, if not the greatest, sensation at the Parliament of Religions as well as outside it.

We sincerely thank Mr. Asim Chaudhuri for his assiduous research work and for presenting the valuable fruits of his labour in such a beautiful book. We are greatly indebted to him. We are equally indebted to Gargi (Marie Louise Burke) for giving the readers an inspiring and thought-provoking Foreword—a worthy masterpiece to a worthy book.

Finally, we would like to add that the opinions expressed by the author in this book are his. They do not necessarily represent those of Advaita Ashrama.

Publisher

Calcutta
2nd April 2000

Acc No:- 4018

FOREWORD

Swami Vivekananda was so vast a being that one can study his thought and the many facets of his personality for years and never come to an end of him. Is it any wonder, then, that there seems no end to tracing the footprints he left behind on this earth? Into the few years of his public mission he seemingly crammed the work of many lifetimes; his inexhaustible love for mankind and his desire to relieve the suffering that men and women seem heir to could not otherwise be satisfied. Only when he knew that he had given enough, as he said, to feed the soul of humanity for hundreds of years was he content to leave this world.

And now, as the years pass and we become more and more aware of who he was and what he did, we want to know all there is to know about him—impossible as that wish will ever be to realize. His biographies, however long, cannot possibly search out every moment of his life; at best, they are only pointers to further research, more discoveries, and additional books. Still, with research, we can learn more and more.

It is of course true that the details of the life of even the most ordinary of persons are without limit. What he or she thought or did, where he went, who she knew.... Where can it end? But of most people such matters are of no or very little consequence. Like dead leaves, they can be swept up and burnt, and no one will be the loser. Indeed the paraphernalia and the incidents of the lives of most of us are best quickly destroyed and forgotten. But of Swamiji, even a small scrap of paper or a shred of cloth that he left behind becomes an object to enshrine and worship. Whatever he touched became charged with his own vibrant holiness and can impart to us some aura of himself. There is no detail of his action too small to record, no whiff of his thought too inconsequential to ponder over, perhaps to write tomes about. If he spoke to some fortunate man or woman for five minutes, we want to know the biography of that person; if he entered a building, we want to know its architecture and its history.

In the past few years several assiduous researchers and devotees of Swamiji have been seeking out unrecorded details of his life in America. Outstanding among these dedicated sleuths is Asim Chaudhuri, who has supplied Swamiji's fellow devotees not only with many details, but has as well uncovered material and information that adds substantially to our knowledge. Indeed, he has unraveled a mystery that has puzzled devotees for many years and has discovered many other fascinating facts, hidden until now. I won't here give away his findings. Readers will find them for themselves in the pages of this work to their delight. Indeed, Asim Chaudhuri himself teases us a bit by withholding some of his most juicy discoveries until the later sections of his book, not, he says, in order to keep us reading, but because the material falls more naturally later on. And to be sure, he needs no gimmick of any sort to keep us turning pages!

One of the great services Chaudhuri's book has done is to give the lie to certain curious attempts undertaken in recent years to belittle the sensation Swami Vivekananda created at the Parliament of Religions and later as he lived in and around Chicago. Again and again in these pages we find firsthand witnesses commenting upon the sheer power and luminosity of his personality. Testimony of this sort already exists, but here is more for those who need to be convinced that Swamiji was no ordinary delegate to the Parliament, no ordinary person at all, and that those who came within his orbit, could not miss his grandeur. Indeed his like had never been seen before on this earth, and perhaps will never be seen again—his own prophecy notwithstanding: "How many Vivekanandas shall be born in time!"

There cannot be enough books that dwell with painstaking accuracy, as does this excellent book by Asim Chaudhuri, on the details of so unique a life as Swamiji's. Chaudhuri has confined himself to examining the details of Swamiji's life during his appearance at the Parliament of Religions and his activities during the few months that came immediately thereafter, as well as during his later visits to Chicago. These were important times in Swamiji's life in the West, and though, as the author points out, the then raw and largely money-obsessed city of Chicago did not fully appreciate the great Swami, it was nonetheless through the portals of that city that he entered the world, for which his mission was meant. Through Chaudhuri's efforts our history of this incomparably great soul has been made richer. Our thanks to him!

Belur Math — Sister Gargi
February 24, 1999

PREFACE

It all started in 1992. It had been a few years since I was transferred by my employer from Cleveland, Ohio to the Chicago area. One day while reading *Patravali*, the Bengali version of "Letters of Swami Vivekananda," I came across a letter Swamiji* had written to Mrs. Kate Tannatt Woods from Chicago on October 10, 1893. It said "Yesterday I returned from Streator where I got 87 dollars for a lecture." Streator is only 50 miles southwest from where I live, about the same distance the Art Institute of Chicago is in the other direction. I asked the Streator Public Library to look for some information on Swami Vivekananda in their newspaper files from early October of 1893. When the Librarian very kindly sent me copies of the announcement of Swamiji's speech along with the *Daily Free Press* report of his lecture of October 7, I was elated beyond description. I thought I had made a major discovery and wrote about it to Swami Pramathananda of the Toronto Vedanta Society, our "Dhirenda" from the Deoghar Vidyapith school days. He calmly advised me to refer to the six volumes of *Swami Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries* by Marie Louis Burke (Sister Gargi)—where I might learn something about Swamiji's trip to the West. I read all six volumes. Sure enough, Swamiji's letter to Mrs. Woods and the *Daily Free Press* report of October 7 were in the first volume (that was the original source). When there were no more to read, I read them again. Although my little discovery suddenly seemed less earthshaking, I was hooked.

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* People who revere Swami Vivekananda often fondly address him by this name, which means "the revered Swami."

I had been exposed to Swami Vivekananda's life and philosophy during my school days in Deoghar, but the inspiration lay dormant for many years. It is easy to get overwhelmed and lost in the hustle and bustle of daily life and its responsibilities. This is especially true when one takes a huge leap like coming to another country altogether—thousands of miles from home—where the culture is substantially different. Once overwhelmed, it is also easy to forget what is important for the soul. But the synergistic effect of being in Chicago during the 100th anniversary of Swamiji's arrival in the city and reading the six volumes of Swamiji chronicles by Sister Gargi finally woke me up and inspired me to follow the footprints of the "superb Hindu"—for that is what the Streator newspapers called him— around Chicago. I thank Sister Gargi for that.

The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples (referred to herein as *Life*) and *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (*Complete Works*), in addition to *Swami Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries* (*New Discoveries*), gave me the basic information I needed about Swamiji's movements during his Chicago days. I started visiting the places I could identify from these books and many other references, and began taking photographs. In 1993, I made the commitment to document my findings and wrote a Bengali poem on the subject that was later published in *Udbodhan* in January 1994. An English translation is given below:

Eleventh September;
Your epochal message
Poured like a shower of eternal bliss
And drenched the world.
You had made a place for yourself
Above the rest.

In that World's Parliament of Religions
Oh Vedantist, you told people

Of the immortal doctrine—
"As many religions, so many ways."
Keeping your master's memory alive,
You brought India's Vedic *mantra*
To the world's pulpit.

Your life, my master,
Materialized the concept
"To serve *Jiva* as *Shiva*."
Buildings, streets and alleys of Chicago
Were blessed by your touch.
But I am the unfortunate one.
Time has wiped most footprints away—
But those that remain
I try my best to capture
In the portrait of my heart.
Therefore I seek houses, churches, parks and halls—
Wherever you left
A trail of heavenly bliss—
And the fond memories of your presence.
Take me in my dreams please,
To those olden and golden days of Chicago.

The ever-grateful Lake Michigan
Wants to wash your lotus feet, O Immortal One!

As I said, time has no doubt wiped away most of Swamiji's footprints, but it is amazing how many of the places touched by the monk still illuminate the Chicago scenery. And I am sure some of his footprints are yet to be discovered. It was only in 1995 when we came to know that Swamiji gave a lecture in Valparaiso, a town only about 50 miles southeast from Chicago; and in 1997 it was discovered that Swamiji gave a second lecture in Streator. Many more such places associated with Swamiji must exist in and around Chicago which are yet to come to light. I was fortunate to discover some of them.

Pursuing my commitment, I have taken some 35 mm. slides of places touched by Swamiji in Chicago and showed them to interested groups of friends and devotees of various Vedanta Societies in the U.S. I have also showed them to the students and ex-students of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, and to the monks of the Institute of Culture in Calcutta. I had no plan initially for any kind of publication. I was perfectly content having the images and the supporting information as my prized possession. It was at the insistence of some friends, as well as some monks, most notably, Swami Suhitananda who was the Secretary of Deoghar Vidyapith in 1995 and currently an Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Sarvadevananda of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, and Swami Bhaskarananda of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington, that I decided to put things together in the form of a book. They all convinced me that it was my obligation to share the information with others.

Photographs have been added liberally to the book to aid in the identification of the places blessed by Swamiji's touch. I have photographed some places where the buildings no longer exist at the site, or have been altered considerably. This was done to aid the process of visualization, for I believe one can still feel the vibrations from his dynamic presence more than one hundred years ago. I have also tried to portray Chicago as it was in 1893, and how it got there. It is important to be in tune with the city as it was then to fully understand Swamiji's relationship with Chicago and some of its inhabitants.

New information, some of it quite significant and not covered in either *Life, New Discoveries*, or anywhere else for that matter, has come to light in the course of this project in time to be included. This new information I have placed against the background of Swamiji's "Chicago days" as already depicted in those publications. While *New Discoveries* had the monumental task of compiling information about Swamiji's entire trip to the West, mine was to elaborate and focus only on Swamiji's Chicago days, with special attention to the places associated with Swamiji that can still be identified after more than 100 years and people who came to know him intimately.

This book is not a treatise on the Parliament of Religions, nor does it aspire to provide researchers *all* the information about the whereabouts of Swamiji during some "lost" days or weeks in Chicago—although I have tried to fill some of the gaps. If even one future visitor to Chicago remembered the saffron-clad monk who made Chicago his "Home Away From Home," and felt inspired by this book to visit the places touched by him, I would consider this endeavor a success.

My initial objective was to stick to the "home" front and stay away from any analysis of the impact of Swamiji's Parliament speeches. But on reflection, I felt it was necessary to delve into it a little. Unfortunately, there are still some detractors around who doubt the historicity of the sensation Swamiji created in Chicago. My intention has been to show that, even in spite of bias and antagonism from several corners, Swamiji succeeded in becoming the principal torchbearer of the new age of religious harmony and tolerance the Parliament was trying to usher in.

So that's the whole story. Varanasi, Gaya, Brindaban, Kamakhyadham are all places of pilgrimage in India sanctified by their associations with gods or goddesses. From that point of view alone, Chicago, along with many other such places around the world touched by Swamiji, a God-man, can be called a *punyatirtha*, a holy place of pilgrimage. And for some of us there is an added interest. The association Chicago had with Swamiji was a relatively recent historical event, not a mythological episode, and it can be traced.

Although this book is published in India by the Advaita Ashrama, whose policy is to follow English spelling, there are two main reasons why the American style of spelling has been used throughout. First, after thirty-three years in the United States I have completely forgotten the English style! Secondly, the greater part of the quoted materials used in the book have been gathered from American sources. The original spellings from non-American sources, however, were not altered.

For the procurement and development of the material, and the culmination of it into the book itself I feel a deep sense of indebtedness and gratitude

—to my wife Nandita for staying home alone many weekends when I was crisscrossing the streets of Chicago with my camera and notebook; and for supporting my many trips, short and long, and my involvement outside the home.

—to my daughter Anurita and son Akashdeep for critically evaluating an early manuscript, and for their support.

—to many happy memories of my parents and younger brother, and of my school days in Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar.

—to Swami Bhaskarananda of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington for his patience while glancing over an early manuscript and for his encouragement and insightful advice.

— to the staff of Meadville/Lombard Theological School of Chicago for granting me access to their library and archives.

—to the monks of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, who helped in many different ways; and especially to Swami Sarveshananda who was kind enough to review the entire manuscript from the historical perspective. His comments and suggestions were highly appreciated.

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—to Peter Shneidre (Hiranyagarbha) of the Vedanta Society of Southern California who waved his editorial wand transforming the rough manuscript into a decent one.

—to Sister Gargi for writing the foreword, and, of course, inspiring me to launch this project in the first place.

—to Swami Mumukshananda, President of the Advaita Ashrama, for kindly accepting the manuscript for publication, and for his feedback and encouragement.

—and finally to Swami Bodhasarananda for turning the manuscript into a book.

Asim Chaudhuri

PROLOGUE

"I am coursing through the length and breadth of this country, but Chicago is my *Math,* where I always return after my wanderings."—Swamiji wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda in early 1894.[1] *Math* is actually the home for a monk. Swamiji referred to Chicago as his *Math* because the family of George W. Hale lived there. This family had adopted him, as it were, and provided him with all the support he needed to sustain his mission in a strange, foreign land. Swamiji fondly used to call Mr. Hale "Father Pope," and Mrs. Hale "Mother Church." At the time Swamiji wrote this letter, his wanderings were basically confined to middle America. But almost a year later, after expanding his sphere of influence to the east coast, he wrote to Mrs. Hale from Cambridge, Massachusetts, expressing his desire to visit Chicago in-between two lecture series in New York—"So you see, Mother, you are the only attraction in Chicago and so long I am in this country wherever you live is my home. As soon as I have time I will run in to see you & the sisters."[2] Swamiji had addressed many an American woman as "mother," but he had never referred to any other place in the West as "home."

Chicago was home to his "Father Pope", "Mother Church", and four of his dear sisters and, consequently, it was his own as well. He loved them dearly and as late as October 1899 wrote to Mrs. Hale—"Why do I remember you and your children—almost every day of my life and not many others?"[3] That was six years after he had first met them.

Of the time Swamiji spent on American soil, about 20 percent was spent in and around Chicago. He visited Chicago at least four or five days every year he was outside India, just like a son or daughter visiting his or her home at least once a year. Sister Gargi, who has so meticulously chronicled Swamiji's wanderings in the West, frequently mentions in the *New Discoveries* that "Chicago was Swamiji's home in the Western world."

All this goes to show that—10,000 miles from his ancestral home in Calcutta— Chicago was truly Swamiji's home away from home. The following chapters will try to illustrate the unique relationship Swamiji had with the city of Chicago and some of its people, and where and how he spent time while visiting his "adoptive" hometown.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(till he sailed for Chicago)

1

Bhuvaneshwari Devi had a dream one night. She dreamt that Lord Shiva, in response to her fervent prayers, agreed to be born as her son. So when on January 12, 1863 a boy was born into the Datta family, she appropriately named him Vireshwara, another name for Lord Shiva. The boy's formal name was Narendranath or, more endearingly, Naren. It was her Naren who later became Swami Vivekananda, a Prophet and Apostle of a rejuvenated Hinduism and a preacher of the eternal universal truths of religion.

Narendranath's family was well known for its affluence, charity, scholarship, and independent spirit. His father Vishwanath Datta was a successful attorney in the High Court of Calcutta. The spirit of renunciation was also a family tradition. Vishwanath Datta's father, Durgacharan, had renounced the material world in search of God. Thus, there was in Narendranath's home an atmosphere of intellectual and spiritual stimulation. He grew up listening to discussions on art, culture, music, and literature, and to stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and the tales of Hindu gods and goddesses his mother would tell him. Both his parents played their respective parts to bring out Narendranath's innate virtues, and prepared him for his destined life unbeknownst to all of them at that time.

The adage "morning shows the day" seemed to apply in the case of Swami Vivekananda's life. The child Narendranath's predilection for meditation, his innate fondness for all kinds of holy men, his penchant for charity, his love of birds and animals, and his adoration of Hindu deities, especially of Lord Shiva, were all signs of things to come. Being a boy of exuberant energy, somewhat tempestuous at times, he had a tendency towards turbulent outbursts. But all his mother had to do to pacify him was to pour a pitcher of cold water on his head and call out the name of Lord Shiva.

Once Narendranath, the leader of the pack of boys he played with, was playing the role of a meditating *yogi* along with his friends. A snake crawled towards them, and his friends fled in fear. Narendranath was oblivious to what was happening around him and kept on meditating until the snake left the area without causing any harm. Incidents like this, and others depicting his courage and righteousness were plentiful during his childhood.

Gradually, Narendranath's unlimited energy was directed more towards the pursuit of intellectual activities and meditation, and less towards games and other activities children of his age normally engage in. When he was fourteen, his family moved to Raipur in what is now Madhya Pradesh. Since Raipur had no school, he got the opportunity to interact more intimately with his father. Vishwanath Datta involved him in discussion with notable scholars, directed him to the study of the Western philosophy, history, culture and other branches of knowledge, and helped him develop a rational inquisitiveness that would forever prohibit him from accepting anything his logic or experience could not verify. And Narendranath started showing signs of great mental power.

After two years in Raipur the family came back to Calcutta in 1879, when Narendranath entered the Presidency College. Soon after, he transferred to what is now known as the Scottish Church College. Here Narendranath, whose powers of reading, comprehension, and retention were extraordinary, started acquiring knowledge in every possible arena of Western and Eastern learning. He was a voracious reader with a prodigious memory. History, philosophy, art, literature, science, medicine—he would attack them all with equal intensity. While he was accumulating this wealth of knowledge, his inner goal didn't change: to find answers to certain fundamental questions regarding realization of the Supreme Being.

Brahmo Samaj, a society founded by Raja Rammohan Roy in the early 19th century, had profoundly influenced the minds of the educated youths of Bengal at that time. Being exposed to Western culture and philosophy, they saw the Samaj as the intellectual and cultural oasis that could eventually rid Hinduism of its idolatry, polytheism, the doctrine of Divine Incarnation, and other such tenets that the Samaj considered irrational. In philosophy, the Brahmos were closest to the Unitarians in Christendom. They believed in the existence of a formless God with attributes. The Brahmo movement was also one of social reform, emphasizing the education of the masses—especially women, abolition of child marriage, and remarriage of Hindu widows. These concepts were all near and dear to the heart of the young college student Narendranath, who became an active member of a faction of the Brahmo Samaj. But although the Samaj satisfied his rational mind, it could not satisfy his innermost spiritual aspirations. Since he could not get answers to his fundamental questions about reality and the existence of the Supreme Being, he remained virtually an agnostic.

Around this time his professor William Hastie, while discussing Wordsworth's poem *The Excursion*, talked about religious ecstasies and mentioned the name of Ramakrishna Paramhansa of Dakshineshwar, who was the only person he knew of who had realized that exalted state of superconsciousness. Through a relative, who also brought Sri Ramakrishna's name to Narendraneth's attention, he met the sage in 1881 at the house of one of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. There, for the first time, Sri Ramakrishana met his future disciple who would take his message and broadcast it around the world. In an extremely auspicious moment in the history of mankind, spiritual mysticism met scientific reason, unbridled love met indomitable courage, and uncontaminated simplicity met robust intellectualism. Narendranath's demeanor, expressive set of eyes, and the apparent sincerity and devotion with which he sang songs in front of him pleased Sri Ramakrishna to no end, and he invited Narendranath to Dakshineshwar.

2

The tale of Swami Vivekananda's life, or of Narendranath's at that point, is in no way complete without mentioning Sri Ramakrishna. This living embodiment of purity and religious harmony was born in Kamarpukur, a small village in Bengal in 1836. Prior to his birth, both his father Khudiram Chattopadhyay and mother Chandramani Devi had experienced strange dreams and visions signifying that a Divine Being would bless their house in the very near future. On February 18, Chandramani gave birth to a boy and they named him Gadadhar.

Gadadhar was a very loving child, not only to his parents and siblings, but also to friends and neighbors. As he grew older he experienced trances from time to time. He would become almost unconscious in his ecstasy at a moment of excessive emotion, whether while viewing breathtaking scenery in the village meadow or watching a religious drama, and it would require a concerted effort by people around him to bring him back to normal consciousness.

Like all other children, Gadadhar started going to the village school. But his interests lay elsewhere. Stimulated by the stories of the epics and sacred books, he took lead roles in religious dramas and sang devotional songs with his friends, spending a considerable amount of time playing truant from school. His extracurricular activities and a simultaneous lack of interest in school were of significant concern to his family. After his father's death, the eldest son Ramkumar went to Calcutta and opened a school for Sanskrit study in order to meet the financial needs of the family. He decided to take his youngest brother Gadadhar under his wing and brought him to Calcutta. But Gadadhar was more interested in illuminating his soul than acquiring a mere bread-winning education.

In 1855, Ramkumar wound up with the job of priest of the goddess *Kali* at the Dakshineshwar temple founded by a rich, pious widow named Rani Rasmani. The brothers moved to the sacred temple-garden on the bank of the Ganges, and here Gadadhar found the kind of congenial and serene atmosphere for which he had been longing in his heart of hearts. Gadadhar found himself getting more and more involved in the various duties of the temple complex and, after Ramkumar's untimely death, was put in charge of the worship of *Kali*. The nominal transformation from Gadadhar to Sri Ramakrishna took place around this time, probably initiated by the temple management. That was the year 1856, and Narendranath was yet to be born.

With a childlike purity of heart, immersed in a state of total God-consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna continued to worship the Divine Mother with intense religious fervor. The realization of God became his fundamental aspiration in life. In a God-intoxicated state he would talk to the image as if he was talking to his own mother, being totally indifferent to what people around him thought of his strange acts. Sri Ramakrishna's ecstatic absorption in the virtual reality was finally rewarded by the Divine Mother, as She could not anymore ignore the earnest yearning of the devout son and blessed him with Her vision. From then on, Sri Ramakrishna's entire life was a luminous tale of eternal love between Mother and son, full of heightened emotions, drowned in ecstasy.

In the years to come Sri Ramakrishna spent his time engaged in various types of spiritual practice, sometimes under the guidance of other holy persons who appeared at Dakshineshwar as if to respond to a call of duty. He practised various paths for God-realization and concluded that the goal can be achieved regardless of the path. Through his personal spiritual experience Sri Ramakrishna established the fact that all religions are true, and that all religions lead to God if practised with sincerity and resolution—"as many religions, so many ways." During this period he was also indoctrinated to Advaita Vedanta and had the rare experience of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, a state of absolute superconsciousness and bliss in which the subject and the object are both said to disappear—the culmination of the Advaita practice.

At this stage of ultimate spiritual maturity, cosmic in mind and heart, Sri Ramakrishna felt the need to unfold to mankind his unique experiences and demonstrate how to overcome the obstacles to realizing God in this life. He had the message, but was waiting for the messenger.

Although Sri Ramakrishna had met Narendranath briefly on a previous occasion in Calcutta, the first meeting of Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath at Dakshineshwar was of tremendous significance. Here, in the familiar surroundings of the temple, a virtual playground for the Mother and her son, he could finally take a good look at his future messenger. Later in his life Sri Ramakrishna recalled a vision he once had. In an exalted state of mind he saw seven venerable sages meditating in a transcendental realm where even gods were afraid to trespass. These sages had surpassed even the gods in knowledge, purity, renunciation, and love. When Sri Ramakrishna was contemplating their supreme holiness, he saw a part of the luminous galaxy condense into the form of a divine child and lovingly clasp the neck of one of the sages. The child woke the sage from his deep meditation and said, "I am going down, you too must go with me." The sage fondly nodded his assent and was again immersed in deep meditation. When Sri Ramakrishna saw Narendranath, he found him to be none other than the venerable sage he once saw in his vision. With tears of joy rolling down his cheeks he said to Narendranath: "Ah! You have come so late. How unkind of you to keep me waiting so long!" Sri Ramakrishna alluded to his own belief that Narendranath was the Incarnation of *Narayana*, fed him sweets with his own hands, and asked him to visit Dakshineshwar again.

The rationalist Narendranath, or simply Naren to Sri Ramakrishna, was surprised at what he thought to be the utterances of a person dwelling in the twilight zone between sanity and insanity. He left bewildered, totally unsure what to make of it. However, inspite of everything he could not stay away from Dakshineshwar for long and visited Sri Ramakrishna again. This time Naren directly asked him, "Sir, have you seen God?" The answer came instantaneously, "Yes, I have seen God. I see Him just as I see you here, only far more intensely." The sincerity and candidness behind the statement, that could only come from the depths of an inner experience, deeply impressed Naren. He was satisfied he had finally met someone who could look him in the eye and say with conviction that he had realized God.

Naren's next visit was memorable, for he had an even stranger experience. In an ecstatic mood the Master made him sit beside him and placed his right foot on his body. The touch gave rise to a unique and novel experience within Naren. With his eyes open he saw the walls, the room, the temple garden, the whole world around him whirl rapidly and disappear into a void dragging him along with them. He felt his world coming to an end and cried out, "What are you doing to me? I have my parents at home!" The Master laughed aloud and stroked Naren's chest, restoring his composure. "All right, let it rest now," he said. "Everything will come in time!"

Naren was convinced that the Master exerted some type of mesmeric or hypnotic influence over him. But he could not believe that an uneducated semi-lunatic could exercise such a profound influence upon a mind as brilliant and resolute as his own. At the same time he could not deny the Master's superhuman mental force. Mystified, perplexed, but still deeply attracted to this kind and lovable man, he prepared his mind to counter such influences in the future. But all his determination was of no avail. Next time he met the Master, a mere touch from him again made Naren lose all outward consciousness. While he was in that state Sri Ramakrishna probed deep into Naren's mind to find out who he really was, what was his mission in this world, and the duration of his mortal life. He learned that Naren was a sage who had attained perfection, that he was a past master in meditation, and the day he recognized his true self he would willingly give up his body. All this only confirmed what he had already known, seen, or thought about.

Naren was in a quandary. His keen intellect, sharpened by his knowledge of Western science and philosophy, could not fully accept Sri Ramakrishna's doctrine of monism, which declares the oneness of God, soul and universe. In addition, the Master's belief that Brahman can be with or without attributes, can exist in innumerable forms, and can manifest in images, was totally at odds with his religious training in the Brahmo Samaj. He needed to validate the truth based on his own experience. Especially disturbing to Naren were Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual visions, which he openly ridiculed, calling them hallucinations. At the same time, he was overwhelmed by the genuine love and affection showered on him by the sage of Dakshineshwar. The Master's unadulterated divine love for him flowed spontaneously and incessantly at the very sight of him, and Naren felt it from the bottom of his heart.

For the next few years Naren visited the Master often. He watched him closely, listened to him intently, but always tested his words in the crucible of his own reason. Those were the golden days at Dakshineshwar, when the Master's disciples would congregate at his feet; listen to his gospel; watch him in moods of spiritual ecstasy; eat, drink, sing, sleep and play with him; and thus slowly transform their lives from ordinary to extraordinary by spiritual osmosis.* With infinite patience, empathy, love, and vigilance, the Master tamed his favorite disciple, demanding strict adherence to moral and spiritual disciplines that are essential for a firm religious foundation in

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The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (translated by Swami Nikhilananda from the Bengali version by M., a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna) gives a vivid account of this period.

life. He tactfully countered Naren's stubborn and rebellious attitude at times with his own superior understanding and knowledge of the truth, gained through his own inner experiences. He had great admiration for Naren's freedom of thought, boldness, and spirit of self-reliance, and constantly praised him in front of others to his disciple's great embarrassment. When Naren protested, his answer was: "I cannot help it. Do you think those were my words? The Divine Mother showed me certain things that I simply repeated. And She never reveals to me anything but the truth."

Slowly, but surely, Naren's doubts were disappearing. Sri Ramakrishna was carefully observing his transformation and helping him along the way. Whenever Naren's rational approach failed to resolve an issue, the Master gave him the necessary insight. On one such occasion, Naren and one of his friends were laughing while making fun of the concept of non-dualism by pointing out the absurdity of seeing God in both animate and inanimate objects. Sri Ramakrishna appeared from nowhere, and on learning the source of their merriment gently touched Naren and then plunged into a deep trance. The magic touch pushed Naren into an entirely new realm of consciousness. He was seeing Brahman in everything around him, the horses, the carriages, the crowd, and even himself. He remained in that state of intoxication for several days until the vision gradually lost its intensity. This was the Master's way of giving him a glimpse of the ultimate truth that Naren could experience himself. There were abundant examples of this sort as Sri Ramakrishna prepared Naren for his predestined mission in this world.

Although Naren was traveling toward higher and higher ground in his blissful spiritual life, there was trouble on the domestic front. First, his parents and relatives were pressing him to get married. But his characteristic abhorrence of a life of sense enjoyment made him turn down the marriage proposals. That was not difficult. Secondly, in 1884 when his father suddenly died, creditors started to hound the family, and some relatives tried to oust them from their ancestral home. Naren was faced with the sole responsibility of providing for the family. In spite of his best effort he could not find a suitable job. For a while, Naren's faith in God's mercy remained firm. But with starvation staring the family in the face, Naren's faith gradually turned to doubt.

Then something very strange happened to Naren one evening when he sank down by the side of a road, probably weakened by hunger and exhaustion. While in a semiconscious state, all of a sudden he felt that the veils of doubt and confusion covering his soul were being successively removed, and he understood the reasons behind the apparent inequity in God's disbursements of justice and mercy. He found clear answers to all the theological problems in his mind. This extraordinary revelation convinced him that the time had come for him to renounce the world.

Thus with his mind set on embracing a monastic life, he visited Sri Ramakrishna for his blessings. Sri Ramakrishna knew all along what was happening to Naren. With tears in his eyes the Master took Naren aside and said: "I know you are born for Mother's work. I also know that you will be a monk. But stay in this world as long as I live, for my sake at least."

Towards the middle of 1885 Sri Ramakrishna showed the first symptom of a throat ailment which was later diagnosed as cancer. Ignoring the advice of the doctors he continued with his regular regimen of spiritual instructions. Naren and his brother disciples gave up their other duties and devoted their entire time nursing him. Naren's spiritual practices intensified at the feet of the Master. He became impatient for the experience of remaining immersed in a trance for a prolonged period. Sri Ramakrishna said to Naren: "Shame on you! You are asking for such an insignificant thing. I thought that you would be like a big banyan tree, and that thousands of people would rest in your shade. But now I see that you are seeking your own liberation."

Naren kept on attaining height after height of spiritual realization, and one day he finally experienced the ultimate in non-dualistic Vedanta—the *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Sri Ramakrishna allowed Naren to stay in that state for a while. When Naren came back to his normal state of mind, the Master said: "Now the Mother has shown you everything. But this realization, like the jewel locked in a box, will be hidden away from you and kept in my custody. I will keep the key with me. Only after you have fulfilled your mission on this earth will the box be unlocked, and you will know everything as you have known now."

The Master's health was constantly deteriorating. One day, unable even to whisper, he wrote on a piece of paper: "Naren will teach." It was the Master's prophecy that his disciple would spread his doctrine all over the world. Shortly before leaving the mortal world Sri Ramakrishna transmitted his spiritual powers to Naren, which made Naren lose his outer consciousness. Regaining consciousness he found the Master weeping. It was then he said to Naren: "O Naren, today I have given you everything I possess—now I am no more than a *fakir*, a penniless beggar. By the powers I have transmitted to you, you will accomplish great things in the world, and not until then will you return to the source whence you have come." On August 16, 1886, Sri Ramakrishna gave up his mortal body.

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After the Master's passing away Naren and the other young apostles, financially helped by one of the Master's householder disciples, lived in a dilapidated house in Baranagar, between Dakshineshwar and Calcutta. It was mainly Naren's determination and enthusiasm, aided by the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna pervading their minds, that provided the mortar to hold them together. At the invitation of the mother of one of the disciples they went to the village of Antpur.

There the young apostles, who were informally initiated by Sri Ramakrishna into *sannyasa* (monastic life), now made a final resolve to take to the life of sannyasis (monks). The day was the Christmas eve of 1886.

After returning to Baranagar the brothers performed the formal sacrifice by the sacred fire and took the monastic vows of chastity and poverty, as well as monastic names. They renounced their family names and continued living in the monastery. Led by Naren, the young monks lived in chaste poverty, spending the entire time in spiritual practices, studying religion and philosophy, and punctuating their discussions by singing devotional songs. They were totally oblivious to their physical needs, sustaining themselves on nothing but boiled rice, salt, and bitter herbs. Sometimes even those were not available. They slept on a hard floor and had barely any clothing to protect their bodies, but their spiritual aspirations continued to attain fruition.

The traditional concept of a wandering monk in India is similar to the theory : "a rolling stone gathers no moss." Although the disciple brothers, including Naren, had already made various short excursions, in 1888 the spirit of a wandering monk, wholly dependent on God, raised its head in Naren and caused him to break away from Baranagar for a tour of the various parts of his homeland. The Swami spent the next four years in solitary wanderings throughout India.* He saw the sufferings of the masses with his own eyes and felt their helplessness in his own heart. Towards the end of 1891 or beginning of 1892, while traveling in Western India, Naren came to know about the Parliament of Religions, to be held in Chicago in 1893 in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition. He adopted the name Vivekananda, one whose joy is derived from an intuitive knowledge of what is real as discriminated from what is ephemeral. And our story begins.

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* *Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples (published by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta) has several chapters covering his experiences during this period.

CHAPTER 1

CHICAGO, UP TO 1893

The first historic mention of Chicago, although the name was not yet attached to the southwestern edge of a lake now known as Lake Michigan, was by the Jesuit annalist Charlevoix. He mentioned the arrival there of a fur trader named Perrot in 1671, amid the lands then occupied by the Indian tribe Miamis. Louis Joliet, an agent of the Governor of France, surveyed the area along the course of Chacaqua river in 1673. Whether the name Chicago originated from the name of the river, or from *Checagou*, an onion which grew plentifully in that area, is a matter of debate.[1]

As the legend goes—and there are more versions of it than the number of skyscrapers presently in the city—in 1779 a black fugitive trapper named Jean Baptiste Point du Sable was the first settler of what is now known as Chicago. He was the son of a Frenchman and a black woman. He allegedly married a Potawatomi Indian woman and built up quite an inventory of buildings and livestock as a result of a successful and prosperous fur trade. Fort Dearborn, built on the Chicago river in 1803, was destroyed and rebuilt in 1816. The city of Chicago was built around this fort. The rebuilt Fort Dearborn formerly stood close to where Michigan Avenue now crosses the Chicago River. Most of it was torn down in 1857, and whatever remained was consumed by the 1871 fire. In 1818, Illinois was admitted to statehood. When the inevitable tax-collector appeared on the scene in 1823, all the property of the settlement was collectively assessed at $2,500.

In 1827, the Illinois State Legislature obtained a Federal land grant to help finance a waterway connecting Lake Michigan and the Mississippi river. This canal, which was eventually completed in 1848, was to play an extremely important role in the founding and early growth of Chicago. Meanwhile, the village of Chicago was organized in 1833 with a population of about four hundred people. Its first charter provided an area of about one square mile, and John H. Kinzie was appointed the first president. The *Chicago Democrat*, the first newspaper in town, also started publication around this time.

In the thirties the settlement started to show distinct signs of vitality. Various industries, churches, lumber mills, public schools, hotels, theaters, as well as the court house and jail were built. In 1837, William B. Ogden was elected the first mayor, and the town had its first census taken showing a population of approximately 4,000. The growth somewhat slowed down towards the end of the decade due, probably, to the "Panic of 1837," caused mainly by the widespread land speculation and overbuilding that affected the entire nation. Illinois almost went bankrupt. Work on the canal stopped. Ogden borrowed money from banks on his personal credit and paid the city bills. The city did not succumb, although property values went down 90% and many investors were wiped out. Chicago's population had grown to about 4,500 by 1840.

The city experienced an unparalleled, phenomenal growth through the forties, fifties, and the sixties, only to be outdone by cities on the Pacific seaboard like San Francisco. The population reached 100,000 by the end of the fifties, and tripled by the end of the sixties. Many "firsts" happened during these three decades. One of the most notable was the engineering marvel of raising the grade of the city from about seven to an average of fifteen to seventeen feet above the level of the lake, and filling in 1,200 acres of swampland in and around the city. The work started in the mid-fifties and continued for some time. Not only private dwellings, but also the largest business buildings, churches, theaters, hotels, and edifices of every kind were raised to the required elevation by means of steam-powered jackscrews. It was all done without vacating a single building. This provided a thorough system of sewerage, rid the city of low swampy sites infested with mosquitoes, and eliminated the one inevitable item in Chicago—the mud. A young engineer named George Mortimer Pullman was the executor of this miracle. He later invested the money made from this highly lucrative assignment in a luxury railroad car business that revolutionized travel throughout the world. George Pullman became a millionaire and built a model city, a "company town," on the south side of Chicago where all his workers worked and lived. The area is now a historic site.

There were other notable incidents during this time. The Chicago Board of Trade was created in 1848. Northwestern University was founded in Evanston, a northern suburb of Chicago, in 1851. By the end of the fifties Chicago became the largest grain shipper and meat packer in the country. Philip Danforth Armour was the king of the meat packing industry, and founded the Armour Institute (in 1893) which later became the Illinois Institute of Technology. Chicago also became the center of the world's largest rail network, thanks to William Ogden and other visionary and investment capitalists from the east. People of Irish, Swedish and Norwegian descent, as well as immigrants of other nationalities, converged in Chicago, making it a very cosmopolitan city. By the end of the sixties, over 50% of the population had been born outside the United States.

The time between the early seventies and 1893 was very significant in the history of Chicago, for it rose like the proverbial Phoenix from ashes of the "Great Chicago Fire" of 1871 to become the splendid host of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. As the story goes, the fire started in a stable behind the frame house of Patrick and Catherine O'Leary at

137 DeKoven Street on a breezy Sabbath night of October 8 due to the overturning of a lamp among loose straw. Within less than 24 hours the conflagration had devoured more than 17,000 buildings, swept through three square miles of the most densely populated area of the city, destroyed millions of dollars worth of property, and left 90,000 people homeless and nearly 300 dead. For parallels to this calamity one must invoke the burning of Rome by Nero, or of Moscow by the Muscovites.[2]

Editor Joseph Medill of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote after the fire—"the people of this once beautiful city have resolved that *Chicago Shall Rise Again.*" Chicago started rebuilding, while the ground was still warm from the fire, with a passion that can only be called fanatical. Within five years the city was completely rebuilt. The city went through another financial panic in 1873, this time due to the collapse of the building boom. In spite of a downturn in the economy which set off a series of strikes and violence that lasted through 1877, millions of dollars were poured into the building of theaters, railroad stations, banks, office buildings and mansions. Money was made available because it was an opportunity to remedy the mistakes of the past, and start afresh. Architects John M. Van Osdel, Daniel Burnham, John W. Root, H. H. Richardson, William Jenny, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright, just to name a few, made Chicago the birthplace of modern architecture; the world has been copying her buildings ever since. Within the two decades after the fire Chicago's population grew to a little over a million. The Chicago Stock Exchange opened; the Palmer House Hotel was constructed; the first telephone exchange in the city was established; and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Hans Balatka, was organized. The 1875 Palmer House Hotel was the first fireproof hotel in Chicago and the first to provide its residents with the convenience of electricity, telephones, and elevators. Wholesale and retail merchandising business flourished, with the appearance of such giants as Montgomery Ward, Richard Sears, and especially, Marshall Field, who introduced new dimensions in both wholesale and retail businesses. In innovation and customer satisfaction Field was second to none, and his financial empire grew at a terrific pace.

A significant change in the texture of the American society, that especially affected Chicago, occurred in the eighties when a large number of immigrants came from Italy and various East European countries. These later immigrants had a very distinct characteristic that set them apart from the rest—they were Catholics. Their religious and non-Anglo-Saxon heritage made them an obvious target for discrimination. The number of people looking for jobs exceeded the number available. The Haymarket Affair of 1886 was the culmination of problems such as unemployment, the rights of minority groups, a fair distribution of wealth, freedom of speech and assembly, political and moral corruption, and the right of workers to organize unions of their choice. A bomb was thrown into a group of policemen who were trying to disperse a small group of workers; one policeman was killed, and several were wounded. The police opened fire and killed some workers. The event led to the condemnation of socialism, communism and anarchism, and had a profound impact on the American labor movement.

The early nineties brought further growth and prosperity. In April of 1890 the United States Congress selected Chicago as the site of the World's Columbian Exposition commemorating the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival on the American shores. The University of Chicago opened towards the end of 1892 with Dr. William Rainey Harper as its first president and an enrollment of 600 students. Long-distance telephone communication started between Chicago, Boston and New York. From 1867 through 1893 the city grew from 24 to 180 square miles, and its population grew from 250,000 to 1.4 million.

The year of 1893 found Chicago, like the rest of the country, in the grip of a financial panic known as the "Panic of 1893." Swamiji mentioned it in a letter to Alasinga Perumal written on August 20, 1893, from Breezy Meadows—"Just now the raising of the rupee in India has created a panic in this country, and lots of mills have been stopped." The panic was less virulent in Chicago than in the other cities of the country, due mainly to the massive preparation for the World's Fair that had led to a local construction boom. Even so, people scoured the garbage for food, and the number of homeless people increased. Strife between labor and capital intensified; crime and vice districts flourished. Unemployment reached record levels. In his book *If Christ Came to Chicago* William Stead, a British journalist who visited Chicago that year, chastised Chicagoans for worshipping money and neglecting the poor and needy. He said:

> This vast and heterogeneous community, which has been collected together from all quarters of the known world, knows only one common bond. Its members came here to make money. They are staying here to make money. The quest of the almighty dollar is their Holy Grail.[3]

Nevertheless, Chicago responded to the problem, and throughout the decade various people and organizations sought to remedy it by their services to the less fortunate.

It was William Stead again who revealed what he thought was the true motivation of Chicagoans when he said:

> Chicago, though nominally Christian, does not concern itself particularly about the Trinity, whose nature and attributes are so carefully and precisely defined by St. Athanasius. So far as Chicago men are concerned St. Athanasius might have spared himself the trouble. They have a trinity of their own of whom they think a great deal more than they do of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In abstruse theological dogmas, modern Chicago takes little stock. But it subscribes with both hands to any thing that is undersigned by the three Dii Majores of Prairie Avenue, Marshall Field, Philip D. Armour and George Pullman. These three millionaires are the real workaday deities of

> modern Chicago. They have the dollars and more of them than anyone else. Therefore, they of all men are most worship-worthy. They are the idols of the market place .... The young man of Chicago has one aspiration. He would like to be as successful as they....Millionaires are some of the images into which society has modeled human clay out of the semblance of Christ.[4]

"If there be a shadow, there must be light as well." This adage is very appropriate for describing the Chicago of 1893. William Stead emphasized the "shadow." About the "light," Donald Miller in his book *City of the Century* says:

> There is in the life of any great city a moment when it reaches its maximum potential as a center of power and culture and becomes fully conscious of its special place in history. For Chicago the moment was 1893....[there was] from the first recorded discovery of the site by a missionary and an explorer in the service of France to the Columbian Exposition, the culmination of a postfire burst of physical growth and technological and artistic achievement, a civic awakening unparalleled in the history of American cities.[5]

The city had the exuberance and vitality necessary to grow from an insignificant trading post to a giant metropolis within a century. In an odd way, Chicago had many of the traits we associate with our main subject, Swami Vivekananda: It was young, energetic, heroic, visionary, and an embodiment of the spirit to conquer the world.

At this particular juncture, while "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times" for the city, Swami Vivekananda arrived in Chicago to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions to be held in September, 1893 as a part of the World's Columbian Exposition.

CHAPTER 2

THE ARRIVAL

The thought of traveling to the West first germinated in Swamiji's mind during his wandering days in India in the early 1890s after he had become increasingly aware of the miserable condition of the masses. At the Abu Road Station he told Swamis Brahmananda and Turiyananda:

> I have now traveled all over India....But alas, it was agony to me my brothers, to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears! It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion amongst them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings. It is for this reason—to find more means for the salvation of the poor in India—that I am now going to America.[1]

The profundity of Swamiji's sadness and intense emotion at the sufferings of others moved Swami Turiyananda to say, "I could clearly see that the whole suffering of humanity had penetrated his palpitating heart...nobody could understand Vivekananda unless he saw at least a fraction of the volcanic feelings which were in him."[2]

Swamiji had heard about the Parliament of Religions towards the end of 1891, or early 1892, while traveling through Western India. The editor of *The Hindu*, Mr. G. S. Iyer, was a member of the Advisory Council of the Parliament of Religions. In that capacity he must have received all the announcements and literature concerning the Parliament. It was quite possible that the news about the Parliament was published in his newspaper around that time. Dewan Pandit Shankar Pandurang also told Swamiji in Porbandar— "Swamiji, I am afraid you cannot do much in this country. Few will appreciate you here. You ought to go to the West where people will understand you and your worth. Surely you can throw a great light upon Western culture by preaching the Sanatana Dharma."[3]

There were essentially two reasons behind Swamiji's mission to the West. First, it was his hope to improve the material condition of the Indian masses through financial help from the West, mainly America. He clearly expressed his ideas on this issue later in his letters to Haridas Viharidas Desai[4] and the Maharajah of Mysore.[5] Secondly, it was to fulfill his Master's prophecy—the divine command. While transferring his spiritual power to Swamiji to carry on his mission, Sri Ramakrishna wrote on a piece of paper—"Naren will teach." This apparently simple prophecy had a much deeper significance. Sri Ramakrishna visualized his favorite disciple spreading his spiritual message, the message of Vedanta, all over the world. Referring to Sri Ramakrishna Swamiji said later in California:

> Now, all the ideas that I preach are only an attempt to echo his ideas....there at his feet I conceived these ideas—there with some other young men....And together we conceived that this ideal had to be spread....I had believed that this man's ideas were for the good of India and the world, and had to be preached and worked out....I believed, as I was living, that these ideas were going to rationalise India and bring better days to many lands and foreign races.[6]

A vision of Sri Ramakrishna beckoning him over the ocean to go to the West reinforced Swamiji's conviction. If he had any doubt, it was finally dispelled when he received Sri Sarada Devi's blessings urging him to pursue his mission to the West.

The two reasons could be perceived as complementary to each other, based on the principle of barter. Swamiji was thinking of offering spirituality to the West in exchange for ways and means to provide the impoverished people of India with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and shelter. He remembered his Master's utterance—"Religion is not for empty bellies."

In early 1893, some of his followers in Madras also insisted that Swamiji attend the Parliament to represent Hinduism. Through the financial backing of the Rajas of Mysore, Ramnad, and Khetri, and of his disciples and admirers from Madras, he was finally on his way to America. Prior to his journey Swamiji told his brother disciple Swami Turiyananda—"Haribhai, I am going to America. Whatever you hear of as happening there [meaning preparations for the Parliament of Religions], is all for this [striking his own chest]. For this [me] alone everything is being arranged."[7]

Leaving Bombay by boat on May 31, 1893 Swamiji arrived in Vancouver after visiting Colombo, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Nagasaki, Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo, Kobe and Yokohama on the way. The ship *Empress of India* arrived in Vancouver at 7 p.m. on July 25. In its July 26 edition, the *Daily News-Advertiser* of Vancouver listed "Mr. S. Vivekanandra[*sic*]" as one of its first class passengers. This was the first mention of Swamiji's name in a North American newspaper, with innumerable instances to follow. He most probably spent the night of July 25 aboard the ship, and took the Canadian Pacific Railway train to Chicago next morning at 10.45 a.m. right from the dock.[8] It is very likely that he never set foot in the city of Vancouver, a sore point for the followers of Swamiji in that part of the country. Swamiji's possible route from Vancouver to Chicago with the closest possible connections was given as:[9]

S. S. *Empress of India*	Ar. Vancouver	7.00 p.m.	Tue.	July 25, 1893
Canadian Pacific Rly.	Lv. Vancouver	10.45 a.m.	Wed.	July 26

Canadian Pacific Rly.	Ar. Winnipeg	10.30 p.m.	Fri. July 28
Great Northern Rly.	Lv. Winnipeg	1.00 p.m.	Sat. July 29 (approx.)
		11.45 a.m.	Sat. July 29
Great Northern Rly.	Ar. St. Paul	7.30 a.m.	Sun. July 30 (approx.)
		7.05 a.m.	Sun. July 30
Great Western Rly.	Lv. St. Paul	8.00 a.m.	Sun. (approx.)
Great Western Rly.	Ar. Chicago	10.30 p.m.	Sun. July 30

Some information about Swamiji and his train journey from Vancouver to Chicago has been given in Kate Sanborn's memoirs. Miss Sanborn writes:

> I had met him in the observation car of the Canadian Pacific where even the gigantically grand scenery of mountains, canyons, glaciers, and the Great Divide could not take my eyes entirely from the cosmopolitan travelers, all *en route* for Chicago. Parsees from India, Canton Merchant millionaires, New Zealanders, pretty women from Philippine Isles married to Portuguese and Spanish traders, Japanese dignitaries with their cultivated wives and collegiate sons, high bred and well informed, etc.... But most of all was I impressed by the monk, a magnificent specimen of manhood—six feet two, as handsome as Salvini* at his best, with a lordly, imposing stride, as if he ruled the universe, and soft, dark eyes that could flash fire if roused or dance with merriment if the conversation amused him. He wore a bright yellow turban many yards in length, a red ochre robe, the badge of his calling; this was tied with a pink sash, broad and heavily befringed. Snuff-brown trousers and russet shoes completed the outfit.[10]

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*Probably referring to the famous Italian actor Tomasso Salvini (1829-1916), or his son Alexander Salvini who also came to the U.S. performing all around the country. Junior Salvini's handsome features and crowd-pleasing performance made him quite a hit with the American audience. Born in 1861, Alexander was close to Swamiji's age. He was also in the U.S. in 1893.

Kate Sanborn was apparently much impressed by Swamiji's appearance, stretching his height by a few inches while describing him. She put him on a mental pedestal where Swamiji looked taller than he really was!

It is not exactly known at which railroad depot in Chicago he disembarked from the train. If Swamiji did follow the route shown earlier, he would have landed in Grand Central Station, the home of Great Western Railway connections. Due to its position at the crossroads of America, Chicago had become the center of America's railroad network. There were six major train stations in the city at that time, Illinois Central between 12th Street and Park Row, Union Station at Canal and Adams, Dearborn Station at Dearborn and Polk, Grand Central Station at Harrison and Fifth, Van Buren Street Station at Van Buren and Sherman, and Chicago & North Western Station (C & N. W.) at Wells and Kinzie—each catering to specific railroad companies.[11] There were many routes by which Swamiji could have come from St. Paul, and he could also have arrived at Union or C & N. W. Stations. Only the Illinois Central and C & N. W., although no longer at their old places, and Canal Street Union stations still remain operational now from that era. The older Union Station of 1880, however, was considerably altered in 1925.

Finally, after sixty days and half-way around the world, Swamiji arrived where he wanted to be—Chicago.

> Young and unheard of, absorbed in God, and as innocent and incapable of worldly ways as a child, he had stepped from the serene and open roads of India, where the sannyasin could sleep beneath a tree or beg his food from door to door, into the midst of the crowded and bewildering hurly-burly of Chicago, where the huge World's Columbian Exposition has been underway for three months and turmoil and confusion were at fever pitch.[12]

He seemed to be on his own at this point. Kate Sanborn, his fellow traveler from Vancouver, either was not on the train that arrived from St. Paul or she did not stick around to make sure that the Hindu monk who had so impressed her was satisfactorily established in a place that was both strange and foreign to him. Kate Sanborn was also on her way to Chicago and the World's Fair, as she mentioned in her memoirs—"We parted. I fatigued myself into positive illness by my pedestrian and cerebral exertions at the Expositions...."[13] From the tone of the statement it seems the parting took place in Chicago, and each went his or her own way. Swamiji also visited the Exposition for the next few days, as we shall see later, but did not come across Kate Sanborn among the tens of thousands of visitors. After being persuaded by one of the hotel agents in the train station, Swamiji went to a first-class hotel in Chicago.[14] Although it was estimated that at the opening of the World's Fair the Chicago hotels would have accommodation for half a million people, only about fifteen to twenty hotels could truly be termed "first class," charging $3 and upwards per night. The *Life* does not suggest any possibilities, but does mention that his hotel had elevators. All first-class hotels probably had elevators at that time, certainly Palmer House did. Will we ever find out what hotel played host to Swamiji? It won't be easy, for the guest list would have been destroyed a long time ago.

CHAPTER 3

THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

In 1893, Chicago hosted a World's Fair known as the World's Columbian Exposition. The first of the great World's Fairs had been organized in London in 1851. Since then, other cities, such as Paris, Vienna, London (for the second time), and Philadelphia had also hosted the fair, each trying to eclipse the previous ones in magnitude and grandeur. The Philadelphia Fair was held in 1876, during the 100th anniversary of the nation's birth. But the Chicago Fair surpassed them all.

The selection of Chicago as the location of the fair was not without hurdles. The proposal to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the landing of Columbus in the Western Hemisphere had been a matter of discussion for some time prior to 1885. The *Chicago Tribune,* as early as November of 1885, had suggested that Chicago was the ideal place for it. By 1889 representatives from New York, Washington and St. Louis, as well as Chicago were presenting their individual cases to Congress for holding the exposition in their respective cities. A dramatic contest took place, some of it humorous, and some of it quite acrimonious. In fact it was during this debate that Charles A. Dana snickered editorially in the New York *Sun*— "Don't pay any attention to the nonsensical claims of that windy city. Its people couldn't build a world's fair even if they won it." The word "windy" seems to insinuate that the Chicago politicians who argued in favor of the city were "full of hot air," but they finally prevailed. Representatives from Chicago, led by Mayor DeWitt C. Creiger, emphasized her position as a center of

"America's railroad network," a commercial center of the west, a city with ample accommodations for several hundred thousand visitors, and a city that could command a substantial array of talent for architectural and engineering purposes. In addition to these, a host of other points in favor of Chicago were presented. The struggle finally ended in late 1889 with Chicago being chosen. A minimum of 154 votes were needed for the House of Representatives to decide in favor of one of the four cities; it was not until the eighth round of voting when Chicago received the required number.

On December 24, 1890 President Harrison signed the following proclamation:

BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
A PROCLAMATION

> Whereas satisfactory proof has been presented to me that provision has been made for adequate grounds and buildings for the uses of the World's Columbian Exposition, and that a sum of not less than $10,000,000, to be used and expended for the purposes of the said exposition, has been provided in accordance with the conditions and requirements of section 10 of an act entitled "An act to provide for celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, by holding an international exhibition of arts, industries, manufacturers, and the products of the soil, mine, and sea, in the city of Chicago, in the State of Illinois," approved April 25, 1890:
>
> Now, therefore, I, Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States, by virtue of the authority vested in me by said act, do hereby declare and proclaim that such international exhibition will be opened on the 1st day of May, in the year 1893, in the city of Chicago, in the State of Illinois, and will not be closed before the last Thursday

> in October of the same year. And in the name of the Government of the people of the United States I do hereby invite all the nations of the earth to take part in the commemoration of an event that is preeminent in human history and of lasting interest to mankind by appointing representatives thereto and sending such exhibits to the World's Columbian Exposition as will most fitly and fully illustrate their resources, their industries, and their progress in civilization.[1]

A corporation was established to oversee the activities leading to the launching of the exposition. The corporation's board member list looked like the "who's who in Chicago" and included such Chicago stalwarts as John V. Farwell, Jr., Lyman J. Gage, Harlow N. Higinbotham, Cyrus H. McCormick, Joseph Medill, Potter Palmer, Charles H. Schwab, and Charles T. Yerkes.[2] A committee of 6,000, undoubtedly the largest of its kind anywhere, was formed to manage all aspects of the forthcoming fair. Daniel Burnham, one of the city's as well as the country's best known architects, was entrusted with the responsibility for the overall appearance of the fairgrounds. The major structures were designed by ten of the most celebrated architects and engineers in the nation. Daniel Burnham was assisted by another top-notch architect, John W. Root. After Root's untimely death in 1891, Burnham chose Charles B. Atwood as the designer-in-charge.

The World's Columbian Exposition was built upon 1,037 acres of land on the shore of Lake Michigan which included the lakefront, Jackson Park, Midway Plaisance, and Washington Park. The area was three times as large as that of any previous international exposition, and the number of square feet under the roof—over 5,000,000—was twice as large.[3] The monumental effort to convert partially swampy, undeveloped land into the remarkable "White City" started in early 1891. "To afford some faint conception as to the proportions of the Fair, it may be stated that, in the construction of the main buildings there were used nearly 20,000 tons of iron and steel and 30,000 tons of staff, many thousand tons of glass, and about 70,000,000 feet of lumber."[4] It was actually the cladding by staff, a lightweight but firm mixture of plastic, cement and jute fibers, that gave the buildings the white appearance. This plaster-like material was first used at the Paris World's Fair (hence the name "plaster of Paris"). The comfort of the fairgoing public was amply addressed by providing over 3,000 toilets, as against 250 at the Paris Exposition in 1889, and 900 at the Centennial Exposition of Philadelphia in 1876.[5] By June 1, 1894 the total costs to the Exposition company had amounted to over $27 million.[6]

The fair was supposed to open in 1892, the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the continent. It was dedicated on October 21,1892, but actually opened on May 1, 1893. "Over its 179-day run, attendance at the fair totaled 27,529,400, or more than one hundred fifty thousand people a day...even after multiple visits were accounted for, it was estimated that about twelve million people took part—this in a nation with a total population of about sixty-three million."[7] But it was not that one out of every five Americans visited the fair; almost half of the 27 million plus visitors came from outside the United States. It was truly an international event.

The fair had given bigness a new meaning. To see everything in the fair, even in a hurried manner, a visitor had to spend about 3 weeks and walk 150 miles. The feature that outshone all others in the fair was its buildings. The historians differ on the exact number, but there were at least 150 of them. The popular historian Hubert Howe Bancroft included the ground plan of the Exposition and listed some of the buildings in his historical and descriptive presentation—*The Book of the Fair*.[8] Buildings that attracted the most attention were the ones with imposing architecture, built near the water. The biggest structure was the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, an engineering marvel. It could hold 300,000 people, each occupying six square feet of area. It was the largest roofed structure ever erected in the world, using 630,000 candle power for illumination. Then there were the Machinery Hall; Agriculture Building; Administration building; Electricity Building; Mines and Mining Building; Transportation Building; Horticulture Building; Children's Building; Women's Building; Fisheries Building; Forestry Building; and finally the Palace of Fine Arts.

The major exhibition halls displayed almost every possible example of human progress in their respective fields of endeavor.

> There were displays of book publishers, architectural firms, schools and universities, chemical and pharmaceutical products, paints, dyes, typewriters, paper, agricultural implements, furniture, ceramics, art metal work, glass, railroad cars, jewelry, clothing, toys, leather goods, hardware, printing presses, refrigerators, the 46-foot Krupp cannon, the "largest gold nugget in existence," a 22,000-pound block of Canadian cheese, and a 1,500-pound chocolate Venus de Milo. In the Fine Arts Building the seventy-four galleries of sculpture and paintings (some 9,000 in all) from Europe and the United States...The diversity and extensiveness of the exhibits in the Machinery Hall and in the Electricity Building, however, did announce in their aggregate that the United States had entered a new technological age. Add to this the exhibits provided by eighty-six foreign nations, colonies, and principalities (including those housed in the separate buildings that nineteen foreign governments erected), and it is not difficult to understand why many visitors felt overwhelmed.
>
> In addition to the main exhibition hall and those of the foreign countries, there were some thirty buildings erected by federal, state, and territory governments (the United States and the state of Illinois were given the better sites around the lagoon), and nineteen foreign nations erected their own structures.[9]

Chicago today: a view from the Adler Planetarium

Chicago Museum of Science and Industry

Midway Plaisance Park between 59th and 60th Streets

The World's Fair vistas were significantly enhanced by the liberal use of sculptural work. There were statues everywhere, of all types imaginable. Referring to all the statuary, Ben Truman said—"In the zenith of its achievements Venice was never so statuesque as Jackson Park. Nor Rome, nor Athens in their haughtiest epochs could point to so many inspiring effigies."[10] Women were given important roles in planning the exposition. Bertha Honore Palmer headed the Board of Lady Managers, consisting of 175 women from all over the country. The wife of Potter Palmer—an extremely high-profile businessman of Chicago and a member of the World's Columbian Exposition Board—and the daughter of the real estate magnate H. H. Honore, Bertha Palmer was the *grande dame* of Chicago society. This radiant socialite and outspoken feminist was the official hostess of the World's Columbian Exposition, and became better known to the country than her husband.[11]

During the dedication of the Women's Building on May 1, Mrs. Palmer said "Even more important than the discovery of Columbus which we are gathered together to celebrate is the fact that the general government has discovered women."[12] Freedom of women was near and dear to the heart of Swamiji as well. He had already discovered them. A review of the events of Swamiji's life in the West will show how much more the women had contributed towards the success of his mission than the men had. With regards to the women of America Swamiji said: "...and their women—they are the most advanced in the world. The average American woman is far more cultivated than the average American man. The men slave all their life for money, and the women snatch every opportunity to improve themselves."[13] Mrs. Palmer came to know Swamiji rather well, as will be evident later.

Swamiji was not known to have written any letters from Chicago after his arrival. But in his letter to Alasinga Perumal from Yokohama he made sure that his Indian friends and followers could write him letters addressed to the Thomas

Cook Co. of Chicago, which, in turn, would forward the letters to him.[14] So, one of the first things Swamiji did after he reached Chicago must have been to visit their office and establish his contact with them. Their office was at 234 Clark Street, which would presently put the site at 230 S. Clark where the Bank of America is now located. The original Thomas Cook's office building was demolished and the Continental Illinois Bank Building was erected in its place in 1923. The new building consumed the entire block, with its main entrance on La Salle Street.

The first known letter Swamiji wrote after his arrival in the United States was addressed to Alasinga Perumal. It was written not from Chicago, but from "Breezy Meadows" in Metcalf, Massachusetts on August 20, 1893.[15] This letter was very significant because his movements during the twelve days he spent in Chicago can be traced only through this letter, although there is not much to go on. He reached Chicago on July 30, and set out to visit the World's Fair the very next day. There were numerous ways to travel to the site at Jackson Park from the center of the city where Swamiji was most probably staying. He could have gone by railroad, cable-car, steamboat, or horse-drawn carriage. The quickest and cheapest way would have been to take the train from Illinois Central station and get off at 60th Street. That would have taken 15 minutes and cost him 15 cents. Since Swamiji was aware of his thinning purse, that was probably what he did. Admission fee for the fair was 50 cents. So, if he went there every day for twelve days until he left for Boston, he would have spent nearly ten dollars for the admission and transportation alone.

The *Life* briefly describes Swamiji's observations and reactions at the fair:

> He was struck with amazement at the wonders he saw. Here all the latest products of the inventive and artistic mind of the entire world had been brought to a focus, as it were, for examination and admiration. He visited the various exposition palaces, marveling at the array of

> machinery, at the arts and products of many lands, and, above all, at the energy and practical acumen of the human mind as manifested by the exhibits.[16]

Although there were exhibits spanning all walks of life, his main interest would have been in the area of science and technology. The Electrical Building was one Swamiji must have visited. Elisha Gray and Nicola Tesla, whom he later came to know personally, were both demonstrating their respective inventions in this building.

In his letter to Alasinga Perumal Swamiji wrote about the Rajah of Kapurthala's visit to Chicago and the fair, and how the Chicago newspapers lionized the Rajah. He met the Raja in the fairground, but in Swamiji's words—"he was too big to speak with a Fakir [like me]." It was true that the Chicago newspapers were full of the news of Rajah Jagatjeet Singh Aliwalia, his wife, and his entourage. The *Daily Inter Ocean* of August 4, 1893 gave the reason for the Rajah's visit—"As a compensation to this country for the alleged ills that have ensued since the demonetization of silver in India, that country has sent to the United States, first the Rajah of Jahore; second, the Nawab of Rampur; and third, the Rajah-i-Rajagan of Kapurthala." A poem also appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* on the same day:

To His Highness, Greeting

Rajah Rajagan Jagatjeet Singh Aliwalia,
Maharajah of Kapurthala,
Heir to the princely revenues of Oudh
And Bari Doab, walk in.
Remove your turban, take a chair, light your hookah,
And make yourself at home.
You are welcome, Maharajah, though you make
A fearful strain upon the alphabet.
Enjoy yourself. Go see our parks and drives,
Our far-famed river with its wharves and docks,

Our world-renowned skyscrapers, viaducts,
Policemen, tunnels, water-works and all
The rest, and then, with bated breath and slow
And reverential step approach the World's
Columbian Exposition!
For at its portals, mark you, Maharajah,
In solemn grandeur as becomes his state
A mightier potentate awaits you.
We call him the Columbian Guard.

Under the heading "Maharajah Said to Be of a Low Social Caste," the August 11 issue of the *Inter Ocean* wrote:

> Oh dear, oh dear! After all our bowing and scraping, and running after and dining the Indian prince, the maharajah of Kapurthala, or whatever he is, we are now told that he is of low caste, and money and an abundance of wives cut no figure in India. My friend, the finger-nail artist... who stands in front of the East India bazaar, not far from the Ferris wheel, and decorates cards while you wait, told me yesterday that it was not modest for him to say so, but he himself was of the caste higher than the maharajah, and he would receive a salaam from him if the "prince" came by. And he said there were several here from India who were of the very first caste...

According to Swamiji, the newspapers ascribed to him some of the remarks made by the Indian finger-nail artist about the Maharajah in order to lend credence to them. The tactics worked, and Chicago dropped the Raja like a hot potato. Swamiji, of course, did not like the idea of being an innocent pawn in the game of degrading one of his countrymen.

It must have pleased him to see the entrepreneurship of the finger-nail artist, who took a long trip to satisfy his dream of seeing the World's Fair in America. This Marathi Brahmin, who was instrumental in deflating the "Rajah—i—Rajagaon balloon," was a philosopher in his own right, as will be apparent from the little anecdote that appeared in the *Unity* magazine of August 3,

1893. In the context of Swamiji's views on religion that he expressed later, this unknown Indian's remarks during his conversation with his customers were interesting enough to warrant quoting the anecdote in its entirety:

> HIS "THUMB NAIL"
>
> ...somewhere near the great Ferris Wheel you may chance upon a Brahmin who is busy turning off very pleasing effects on little cards with his thumb nail. He has bright eyes and a plentiful flow of wit. He is usually surrounded by admiring ladies.
>
> "Only one nickel, Lady; will you buy? You seem interested." The lady has been studying him intently for some minutes.
>
> "No, I believe not. But I would like to know if you are a Christian?"
>
> "A Christian! No, indeed. Why should I be a Christian? I am a Brahmin. As well ask 'are you a Brahmin;' but I know you could not be. No more could you be a Christian if you were born in Turkey. You would be Mohammedan [for] sure. For Bible you will read the Koran—"
>
> "That is not my opinion."
>
> "Opinion! It is not opinion, it is fact. We are all born to our religion. But it's all the same—Mohammedan, Christian. Have a flower, Lady?"
>
> Another lady interposing: "I would like one with your autograph."
>
> "Oh, sure! 'Tis but a moment to write it."
>
> And as he writes: "This is not my profession. I wished to come to the Fair. My people say no. But the vessel come, the vessel go, and I was gone, too. So I make my thumb nail—I learn it when a boy—to serve me. I earn some money, I see the Fair, I go home. As for my religion, I am nobody here. Here, the Christians on top. I am under. At home I am on top, the Christian under. But we should not be so unkind. Apple pie you like; lemon pie I like; but

> it's *pie* all the same. So with religion. Different, but the same."
>
> "But have you no fear of going to hell?" persisted the lady, intent on his soul.
>
> "To hell? Oh, no! I fear to go nowhere; so hell is not in me, I am everywhere safe."
>
> I was interested in noting that this little by-play of religion in nowise lessened his income. His autograph was all the more in demand.
>
> With a smile, he said: "Since you so much demand the autograph, I can make no flower. I must make a bigger price. Ten cents, Madam."

Philosopher turned businessman—that was contemporary Chicago for you!

While visiting the fair, Swamiji donned his usual robe-and-turban outfit. With such a conspicuous outfit he must have attracted the attention of reporters and photographers, although no mention of a Hindu monk in strange attire can be found in the local newspapers. Except for the one couple belonging to the "highest Chicago society" who was introduced to Swamiji by a Varada Rao of Madras, he did not mention any other acquaintances.[17] But he must have made some along the way. Mr. C. Lalubhai, a fellow traveler on the *Empress of India* was there in Chicago at that time. There must have been others as well.

Researchers in the past sought in vain to identify who this "highest Chicago society" couple was. For over 100 years the true identity of the couple mentioned in Swamiji's letter remained a mystery. In his subsequent letters he didn't refer to any couple who could fit the profile of the mystery duo. Sister Gargi declares, "Thus, to date, the mystery remains unsolved."[18] It is as if Swamiji had intentionally avoided mentioning the couple.

Solving the "Case of the Mystery Couple of Chicago" was not high on my list of objectives while plunging into this project, but serendipity prevailed. An extremely significant letter by a lady from Kenosha, Wisconsin to a Chicago clergyman, unearthed while I pursued Swamiji's Unitarian connection, led to the identification of this couple. The full account of this discovery will appear in a later chapter. It is not the intent here to heighten the suspense of the reader by delaying the revelation. The letter which revealed the identity of the mystery couple was written much later and, therefore, is more appropriately addressed in that time period.

Swamiji's purse was steadily thinning in the meantime. He found Chicago to be a very expensive city. His letter of August 20 to Alasinga Perumal provided some indication of his disappointment. Talking about his state of mind during those days, he said:

> All those rosy ideas we had before starting have melted, and I have now to fight against impossibilities. A hundred times I had a mind to go out of the country and go back to India. But I am determined, and I have a call from the Above; I see no way, but His eyes see. And I must stick to my guns, life or death.... Starvation, cold, hooting in the streets on account of my quaint dress, these are what I have to fight against.

It was his earnest belief in the divine command that kept him going against all kinds of odds. The hardest blow came when he found out that the Parliament would not convene until the second week of September, and that no one would be admitted as a delegate without proper credentials. The last date for registering as a delegate, even with the credentials, was long past. Swamiji then decided to head for Boston. He packed his bag and baggage and left Chicago on August 13. According to the aforementioned letter, Mr. Lalubhai accompanied him on the train to Boston. That could be a mere coincidence, because there was no mention of Lalubhai during either his Chicago or his New England sojourn.

Neither the lack of credentials, nor the expiration of the last date for registration prompted his departure from

Chicago; it was lack of funds. He alluded to that in the letter—"My friends there [Chicago] write me to represent India. And the gentleman, to whom Varada Rao introduced me, is one of the directors of the Fair; but then I refused as I would have to spend all my little stock of money in remaining more than a month in Chicago." A director of the World's Fair could have easily arranged for a late registration.

The World's Fair was in session from May 1 through October 30. Detractors had to keep their mouth shut, because it made money. But its value as a great cultural event was much more significant than its financial success. After the closing of the fair there was discussion about saving the fair's principal buildings for posterity for their superb design and architecture, but the cost was prohibitive. The buildings were inhabited by vagrants and tramps throughout the rest of 1893 and the first part of 1894. Then on July 5, 1894 arsonists set fire to the historical buildings during the clash between federal troops and striking railway workers. Only two buildings were eventually saved. *La Rabida*, or the Columbus Memorial Building (the model convent that held Columbus relics during the Word's Fair), became La Rabida Children's Hospital. The building was subsequently torn down in 1935 and replaced with three buildings which retained the name.

The other structure saved was the Art Palace, or the Palace of Fine Arts, universally praised as an exemplary work of art . Designed by the New York architect Charles B. Atwood, and located on the north bank of the North Pond, this was the only building built to last a long time housing its priceless collection of art. It came to be known as the Atwood's Palace, and last it did, even until today. It was refurbished and became the Museum of Natural History. The Museum of Natural History moved to Grant Park in 1920, and in 1934 the Palace of Fine Arts Building became the nucleus of what is now known as the Museum of Science and Industry. The North Pond still carries the reflection of the building as it did in 1893.

Swamiji had visited the World's Fair for at least ten days initially. In all probability he went back for additional visits later, during or after the Parliament days. Knowing how interested Swamiji was in every aspect of the World's Columbian Exposition, one can safely assume he left his footprints in the Museum of Science and Industry building. The Midway Plaisance, an area surrounded by Stoney Island Avenue on the east, Cottage Grove Avenue on the west, and 59th and 60th streets on the north and south respectively, offered fairgoers a chance to amuse themselves and an opportunity to see how the people in other parts of the world lived. It was essentially a "bazaar of all nations," and the "exposition's commercially run entertainment strip." Swamiji must have visited the Midway several times; either to talk to the Indian finger-nail artist, or to take a spin on the Ferris Wheel, or to visit the East India Bazaar. Surrounded by rows of the University of Chicago buildings on the north and south sides, the area now consists of a series of fields where the students get together for games of soccer or baseball. The Ferris Wheel was right in the middle of a field between then Greenwood and Lexington Avenues, where the finger-nail artist sold his wares. The present location will be somewhere in the middle of the Midway Plaisance Park, between Ellis and University Avenues. This giant wheel was a superb engineering feat and could carry more than 2,000 people at one time. Two streets on either side of the fields now bear the name Midway Plaisance, reminiscent of the World's Fair days.

Eugen Seeger wrote in his book *Chicago The Wonder City*—"The history of the World's Columbian Exposition is a tale of miracles. It is a string of wonders that surpasses fiction in strangeness, and that will stand forever as a mighty monument to the admirable enterprise and indomitable spirit of Chicago and its people."[19] Chicago had put its best foot forward and welcomed Swami Vivekananda, the city's future part-time resident, in its own inimitable style.

CHAPTER 4

VISIT TO NEW ENGLAND

Although this part of Swamiji's initial days in America had nothing to do with Chicago, his New England sojourn played a crucial role in what happened in Chicago afterwards.

The question whether Swamiji would have been successful in achieving his mission had he continued living in Chicago amidst extreme helplessness and financial difficulty is a difficult one to answer. If the Parliament of Religions was being organized for him, as Swamiji had originally believed, probably some situation would have developed allowing him to continue living in Chicago and attend the Parliament. But who can say that leaving Chicago for New England was not a part of a divine master plan: a plan to bring him in contact with the enlightened society of the east coast; a plan to give him the opportunity to spread his message over an extended geographical area and get him introduced as a potential delegate to the Parliament? If this was so, Swamiji did not always wholeheartedly subscribe to the "master plan" theory, as he wrote to Alasinga Perumal on August 20 indicating disappointment and frustration—"If I go to Chicago again, I will look for them [talking about phonographs]. I do not know whether I shall go back to Chicago or not."[1] That was just prior to his meeting with Professor John H. Wright.

If we accept the "master plan" theory, the key incident was meeting Kate Sanborn on the train from Vancouver to Chicago. If that hadn't happened, history probably would have taken quite a different course. Or, would it? There was probably a "master plan no. 2" if Kate Sanborn did not take a liking to this "Salvini-like" Hindu monk. But if we recall what Swamiji had said to Swami Turiyananda about the Parliament being organized for *him* only, perhaps we can permit ourselves to conjecture that all these incidents took place to ensure the prophecy would come true. Sanborns and Wrights were just playing their respective parts in the big play.

Kate Sanborn had given Swamiji her card, and invited him to come and visit her in Metcalf, Massachusetts. Miss Sanborn wrote in her memoirs—"I told him, as we separated, I should be most pleased to present him to some men and women of learning and general culture, if by chance he should come to Boston."[2] So, it appears that Swamiji didn't go to Boston in desperation to avoid a personal economic disaster. He knew exactly why he was heading that way. There were a number of cities in the U.S. he could have visited, requiring lesser train fare, that would have been less expensive than Chicago. Miss Sanborn was probably the first American who, on her own, had extended him an invitation to visit her home, and he accepted it. He was lonely and needed help. It is very likely that Thomas Cook Co. forwarded his letters, because Swamiji had left Kate Sanborn's address with them. That was how Alasinga Perumal's letter wound up there only six days after he left Chicago. Perumal had no way of knowing Swamiji's Metcalf address. Even before Ellen Hale (discussed in the next chapter) came into the picture, this lady actually opened the door to his mission in America.

Swamiji left Chicago on August 13 for Boston, and ultimately arrived at Kate Sanborn's home—"Breezy Meadows*." Kate Sanborn introduced Swamiji to her cousin

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*There is an interesting story associated with "Breezy Meadows". The author visited the place in the summer of 1995 and found it "off limits" to the public by order of the local police. There allegedly was a tree on that farm through which the morning sunlight had created the silhouetted form of the Virgin Mary, and the place had been inundated with Christians from all parts of the country. Since this was private property, though vacant at that time, police had to intervene and

Franklin Benjamin Sanborn. He was the last of that school of philosophers which included Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott. "Indeed the two [Swamiji and Frank Sanborn] must have delighted in each other's company."—Sister Gargi said in the *New Discoveries*.[3]

After visiting Boston, Annisquam, Salem, Saratoga Springs and other small towns in New England Swamiji came back to Chicago on September 9. Two very significant things happened during this short period away from Chicago. In Annisquam he gave his first public discourse in America, and there he became a very close friend of Prof. John Henry Wright, a Harvard professor, to whom Swamiji had been previously introduced by the Sanborns. It was Prof. Wright who gave him what he desperately needed in order to attend the Parliament of Religions: a recommendation letter to the Chairman of the Committee for the Selection of Delegates. In addition, Prof. Wright gave him the train fare to Chicago and a letter of introduction to the committee in charge of accommodating and providing for the Oriental delegates.[4]

Thus Swamiji left Saratoga Springs for Chicago on September 8, equipped with the necessary credentials to take part in the Parliament of Religions. He was looking forward to presenting his message to the people of the West.

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lock the gate. There was still an opening by the side of the wooden gate, and people were still going through; as did the author. All the buildings were gone, the last one having been razed about two years earlier. The pond with lilies and the brook are still there where Swamiji spent many a quiet hour.[5] It is interesting that the Christian "sighting of the Mother" would occur at a place blessed by a Hindu monk who had tremendous reverence for all "Mothers."

CHAPTER 5

HOME SWEET HOME

Certainly the most publicized part of Swamiji's visit to Chicago, or his visit to the West for that matter, was his first speech at the Parliament when he had addressed the audience as his "sisters and brothers of America." The next would be the chain of events that followed his arrival from Saratoga Springs on the eve of the Parliament. This short period of probably less than 24 hours has been the setting for innumerable stories and sketches. The picture of Swamiji curled up in a freight car at the railway station, or begging for alms from door to door, or sitting on the curb exhausted from walking have been firmly embedded into the minds of Indian children for generations through books, comics, and word-of-mouth stories. The difference between the Parliament and this period was that the former was better documented.

The train station where he disembarked on arrival from Saratoga Springs is not known. The destination station would actually have been dictated by the railroad one chose. In a letter to his brother disciples in 1894 (the letter was not dated, but presumably written in the summer) Swamiji mentioned that he had seen Niagara Falls seven or eight times.[1] There is no evidence that Swamiji had made one or more special trips to visit the Falls. In that case, he could not have seen Niagara Falls that many times unless he had passed through the town every time he went to or came back from the east coast. If we assume that the letter was written towards the end of 1894, he could have passed Niagara Falls at least five times. To pass through Niagara Falls that many times, Swamiji must have used the popular New York Central and Hudson River Railroad (NYC & HRR). The railroad advertised its services as—"Only four-track railroad in the world. This is America's four-track trunk line between the east and west. It is the direct line to Niagara Falls, along the historic Hudson River and through the beautiful Mohawk Valley. It is the most comfortable route between the east and Chicago, the "World's Fair City."[2]

Sister Gargi speculates that Swamiji took the Delaware and Hudson River Railroad from Saratoga Springs.[3] He might have done that, and then changed trains in Albany, New York to connect with the NYC & HRR to go west to Niagara Falls. The Delaware and Hudson did not cover that territory. At Niagara Falls Swamiji had two choices. He could have gone to Detroit along the northern shoreline of Lake Erie and then on to Chicago. In that case, he would have taken the Canadian Southern and Michigan Central railroads, a more probable route. If he chose to go to Chicago via Cleveland and Toledo, he would have taken the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern railroads and traveled along the southern shoreline of Lake Erie. Both these routes operated in collaboration with the NYC & HRR. But according to the railroad timetable published in the *Inter Ocean* of September 9, it was the Michigan Central through Detroit that ran the "Niagara Falls and Buffalo Special." The point of considering the railroads in detail is to pinpoint the exact station Swamiji arrived at. This is relevant, as we shall see.

So on September 9, probably around mid-day, Swamiji touched Chicago for the second time. In spite of having all the credentials in his possession he could not contact Dr. Barrows' office, because he had lost the address. A merchant on the train had promised to give him directions, but on his arrival at the station Swamiji could not find him.[4]

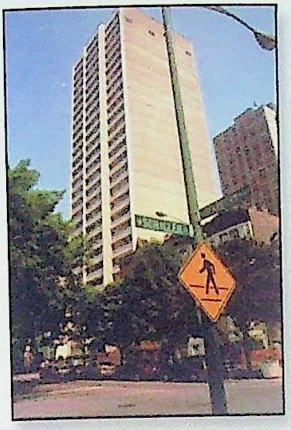
The *Life* mentions his plight in that part of the city at that time:

> He made inquiries of the passers-by, but it being the north-east side of the city where mostly Germans lived, no one could understand him....Night was coming on. He could not even make anyone understand that he wanted a hotel. He was lost and knew not what to do. At length he lay down in a huge empty box in the railway yards and, trusting to the guidance of the Lord, soon freed himself of all anxieties and fell asleep....Morning came; he arose and "smelling fresh water", as he said, followed the scent and found himself in a short time on Lake Shore Drive, the most fashionable residential avenue in the city, where millionaires and merchant princes dwelt.[5]

It appears that one of the most interesting segments of Swamiji's Chicago experiences also turns out to be one of the most difficult to piece together. Sister Gargi again speculates that it was the Dearborn Station where he disembarked.[6] In that case he would not have had any difficulty communicating with people, because the station was at the south end of the business district where English was the prevailing language. If Swamiji had walked north from there he would have noticed all the hotels around him. He should have been somewhat familiar with that area since he had probably spent some time in a hotel in that neighborhood when he first arrived in Chicago. The *Life*'s account brings out some interesting features about the location of the station, and these are: (a) it was possibly on the north or north-east side of the city; (b) was close to the city's German-speaking neighborhood; (c) was at a short walking distance from Lake Shore Drive; and (d) was close to Lake Michigan where one could not directly see the lake, but could smell the water. Assuming Swamiji spent the night at the same station he came in from Saratoga Springs, a reasonable assumption, and looking at the locations of the city's principal railroad stations, one cannot help but conclude that the only station which would fit the description was Chicago & North Western (C & N. W) station at Kinzie and Wells. The station does not exist there anymore, part of its vast yard and buildings having been consumed by the gigantic Merchandise Mart Building standing there now.

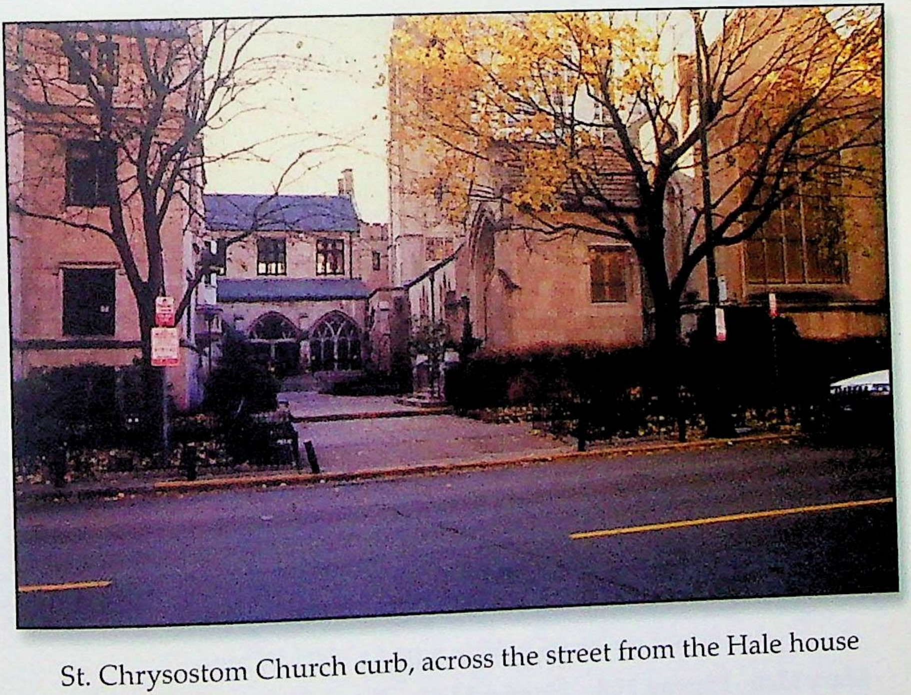
Assuming it was the C & N. W. Station, Swamiji got off the train and had to ask people for directions to the Parliament office. Although the people living around the area at that time were mostly Italians, there must have been a number of English-speaking people at the station. Someone must have pointed him in the wrong direction and he started walking north along the branch of the Chicago River. People giving him directions most likely would not have known where the Parliament office was. But supposing Swamiji had mentioned Rev. John Barrows' (Chairman of the Parliament of Religions) name and the fact that he was the pastor of a Presbyterian Church, someone could have directed him to a Presbyterian Church on the north side by mistake. His route would then have taken him to the Old Town neighborhood where the German-speaking population lived.

Germans "settled in tightly concentrated enclaves on the North Side, the Northwest Side, and along the branches of the Chicago River, an area of tremendous industrial activity.... Germans lived together in these virtually self-sufficient urban villages, where German was the language of common discourse."[7] All Swamiji had to do was to walk about two miles north and he would be in a German-speaking area. If he had traveled along the river he would be going through an industrial area where there were not many homes. Richard Lindberg says--"Those [Germans] less inclined to political activism settled quietly along North Avenue in the Old Town Neighborhood—known in later years as the 'German Broadway.' Community life centered around St. Michael's Church, constructed in 1866 at Eugenie and Cleveland Street..."[8] The corner of Eugenie and Cleveland was about two miles north of the station. The two Presbyterian Churches, one on Belden and Seminary, and the other on Willow and Orchard (First German Presbyterian Church) were also in the general area. So it is likely that Swamiji had wound up there looking for a Presbyterian Church.

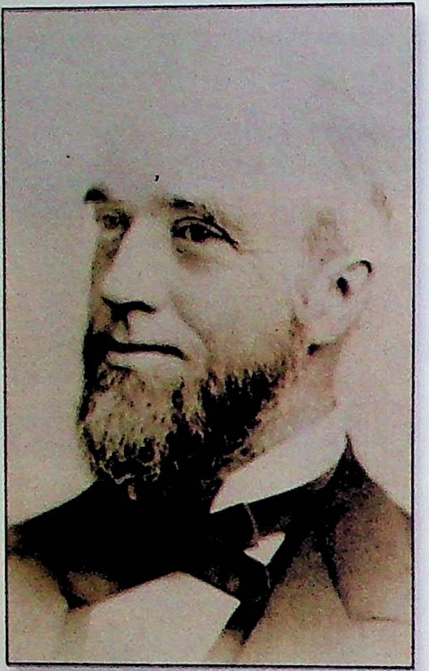


The high-rise building at 1415 N. Dearborn Street

1415 N. Dearborn Street (previously 541 Dearborn Avenue)



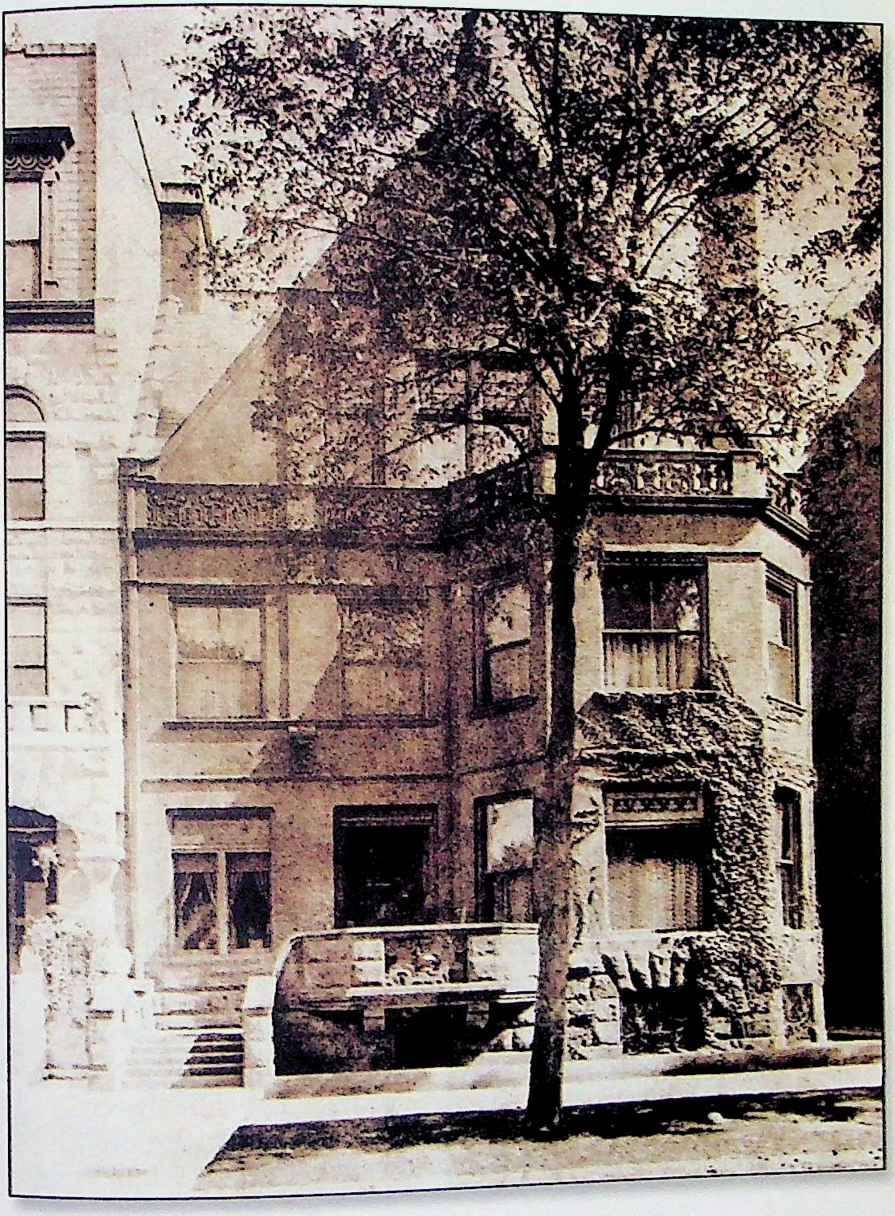
St. Chrysostom Church curb, across the street from the Hale house



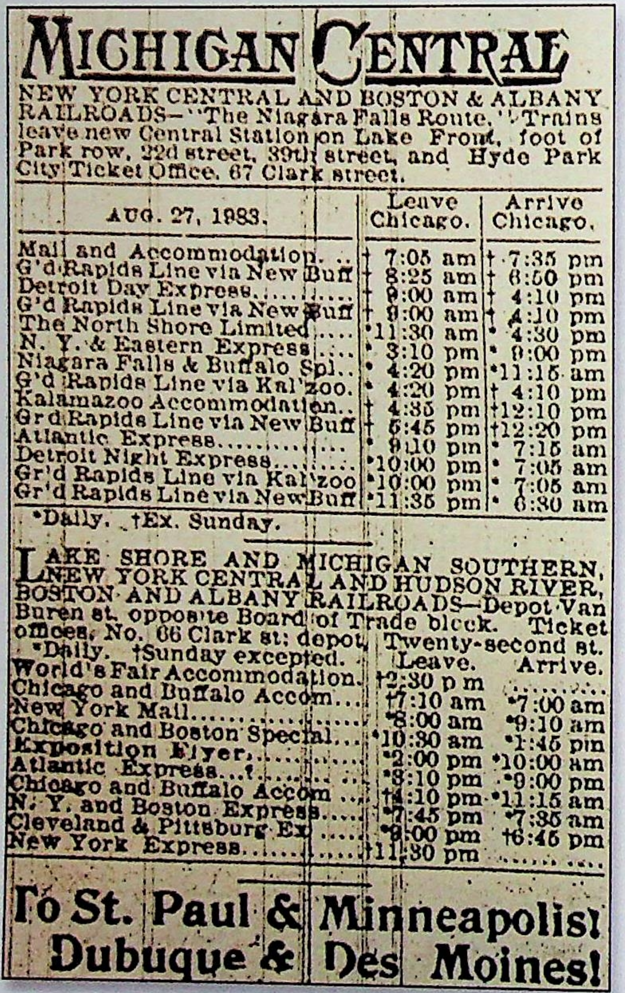
George Washington Hale

Ellen Isabelle Hale

(From left to right)
Mary Hale, Harriet Hale, Harriet McKindley, and Isabelle McKindley



George W. Hale's home at 541 Dearborn Avenue



MICHIGAN CENTRAL

NEW YORK CENTRAL AND BOSTON & ALBANY RAILROADS—"The Niagara Falls Route."—Trains leave new Central Station on Lake Front, foot of Park row, 22d street, 39th street, and Hyde Park City Ticket Office, 67 Clark street.

AUG. 27, 1983.	Leave Chicago.	Arrive Chicago.
Mail and Accommodation. ..	† 7:05 am	† 7:35 pm
G'd Rapids Line via New Buff	† 8:25 am	† 6:50 pm
Detroit Day Express...........	† 9:00 am	† 4:10 pm
G'd Rapids Line via New Buff	† 9:00 am	† 4:10 pm
The North Shore Limited.....	*11:30 am	* 4:30 pm
N. Y. & Eastern Express.....	* 3:10 pm	* 9:00 pm
Niagara Falls & Buffalo Spl..	* 4:20 pm	*11:15 am
G'd Rapids Line via Kal'zoo.	* 4:20 pm	† 4:10 pm
Kalamazoo Accommodation..	† 4:35 pm	†12:10 pm
Grd Rapids Line via New Buff	† 5:45 pm	†12:20 pm
Atlantic Express.............	* 9:10 pm	* 7:15 am
Detroit Night Express.........	*10:00 pm	* 7:05 am
Gr'd Rapids Line via Kal'zoo	*10:00 pm	* 7:05 am
Gr'd Rapids Line via New Buff	*11:35 pm	* 6:30 am

*Daily. †Ex. Sunday.

LAKE SHORE AND MICHIGAN SOUTHERN, NEW YORK CENTRAL AND HUDSON RIVER, BOSTON AND ALBANY RAILROADS—Depot Van Buren st. opposite Board of Trade block. Ticket offices, No. 66 Clark st; depot, Twenty-second st.

*Daily. †Sunday excepted.

	Leave.	Arrive.
World's Fair Accommodation.	†2:30 p m	....
Chicago and Buffalo Accom...	†7:10 am	*7:00 am
New York Mail....................	*8:00 am	*9:10 am
Chicago and Boston Special...	*10:30 am	*1:45 pm
Exposition Flyer..................	*2:00 pm	*10:00 am
Atlantic Express.................	*8:10 pm	*9:00 pm
Chicago and Buffalo Accom ...	†4:10 pm	*11:15 am
N. Y. and Boston Express.....	*7:45 pm	*7:35 am
Cleveland & Pittsburg Ex	*9:00 pm	†6:45 pm
New York Express..............	†11:30 pm	....

To St. Paul & Minneapolis!
Dubuque & Des Moines!

Michigan Central Railroad timetable in *Inter Ocean* of September 9, 1893

Unsuccessful in locating the Parliament of Religion's office or Rev. Barrows' Presbyterian Church as the evening approached, Swamiji must have retraced his steps back to the station and decided to spend the night of September 9 in a freight car at the huge yard of C & N. W. Station. Darkness would have descended around 7.30 p.m. in Chicago at that time of the year. With his photographic memory he could have retraced his steps even in the dark.

That is all well and good. All this makes good sense if he really disembarked at the C & N. W. Station coming from Saratoga Springs. But there is one problem. There were no trains from the east that directly came to this station. The C & N. W. Railroad served the territory west of Chicago. If Swamiji took the Niagara Falls route of the NYC & HRR, which he probably did, he would have taken the Michigan Central from Detroit and landed at the Illinois Central Station at the foot of Park Row. In that case he would have arrived in Chicago at 11.15 a.m., assuming the train was on time. This station being on the south side of the city's business district, he could have taken a connecting shuttle to go towards the center of the business district and wound up at the C & N. W. Station at Kinzie and Wells. He could have also disembarked from the train by mistake at an earlier station and taken the shuttle from there.

So on the morning of September 10, the day before the start of the Parliament, Swamiji was out on the street following the smell of fresh water. This time he walked east from the station and soon reached Lake Shore Drive. Hungry and tired, he begged for food and directions to the Parliament office as he plodded through the streets. The area was an exclusive residential neighborhood where the Potter Palmers lived. These people, and probably their butlers, had no time or sympathy for a strange-looking monk, in rumpled clothes and with a travel-worn appearance, and slammed the doors in his face. Swamiji traveled the entire area of what is now known as the "Gold Coast," still an exclusive residential area. He finally arrived at the north end of Dearborn Avenue, two blocks from Lincoln Park. Totally exhausted, he sat down on the curb on the opposite side of the Hale home at 541 Dearborn Avenue. The Hale home was later demolished in the late 1960s and a high-rise apartment complex built on the site. The number of the high-rise building now is 1415 North Dearborn Street.

Swamiji must have sat on the sidewalk in front of the present St. Chrysostom Church. Although the inscription on its outer wall says the church was erected in 1893, it was actually completed in 1894. The congregation met in the new building for the first time in November 1894. In 1925 the church was renovated and won awards for architectural excellence. Mrs. George W. Hale, or Ellen Hale, lived across the street from the church. As she came out of her house, she noticed the foreigner sitting on the curb wearing strange clothes and asked the now famous question—"Sir, are you a representative to the World's Parliament of Religions?" This question must have come as a great relief to Swamiji considering what he had gone through that morning and the day before. It was pure, unadulterated music to his ears. Swamiji explained his predicament. Mrs. Hale took him in, gave him something to eat, took him to meet the officials of the Parliament of Religions, and set the chain of events in motion that would go down in history as the initiation of the Vedanta movement in the West. If meeting Kate Sanborn was like turning the ignition key to start the engine, meeting Ellen Hale was like putting the car in gear to go forward. There was no stopping now!

Since the Parliament was scheduled to convene the next day, there was no time to lose. The Hales must have taken Swamiji promptly to the Chairman Rev. John Barrows' house at 2957 Indiana Avenue. The site is still at the same number,* but is now occupied by an apartment complex. The *Chicago Record* of September 11 reported that Swamiji along with three other religious leaders were sitting in Rev. Barrows' parlor on September 10. Swamiji undoubtedly received all his papers there identifying him as a registered representative to the Parliament. In all probability, the arrangement for his boarding and lodging were also made here. This was the first time his name was mentioned in a Chicago newspaper in reference to the Parliament. The *Record* also quoted his short comments on his first impression of America and the impending Parliament. Rev. Barrows must have heaved a sigh of relief on meeting Swamiji. Chairman Bonney's chief counselor, President Miller of the Christian College in Madras, had despaired for a time of securing any Hindu representative for the Parliament.[9] Now they found what they had been looking for, and found the very best.

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* Chicago house numbers in the area south of Roosevelt and east of the river never changed.

Ellen Isabelle Hale's magnanimous action did not go unrewarded. She acquired an Indian son who would forever call her mother, "Mother Church" to be more specific, and shower her with infinite love and affection. There might have been some connection between Swamiji calling Mrs. Hale "Mother Church" and the fact that Ellen Hale and her daughters were Christian Scientists. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, at Boston, founded in 1892, was christened "Mother Church" by its founder Mary Eddy Baker. Swamiji's relationship with the Hale family has been documented by Falk from several sources.[10] Information from Falk's article and other sources have been used here to establish the Hale home at 541 Dearborn Avenue in Chicago as the second home of Swamiji, next in importance to only his ancestral home at 3 Gaur Mohan Mukherjee Street in Calcutta.

The Hale family, especially Ellen Hale "supplied him with [all his] mundane necessities, received and forwarded his mail, helped him with his banking, and listened to his joys and sorrows." Like a mother, "she bought him overshoes to protect his feet against Midwestern rains; at other time she mailed him shirts, a robe, and a summer coat."[11] Swamiji used to send his earnings from lectures to her for deposit to his bank account.

Books, pamphlets, rugs and other gift items arrived from India at the Hale address; it was "Mother Church" who saw that they were released from U.S. Custom and forwarded according to his instructions. Whatever mothers do all over the world, Ellen Hale did every bit of, and then some, for her adopted son. Swamiji's own description of his adopted family can be found in his letter to his brother disciples in September of 1894:

> I shall now tell you something about the Hales to whose address you direct my letters. He and his wife are an old couple, having two daughters, two nieces, and a son. The son lives abroad where he earns a living. The daughters live at home....All the four [girls] are young and not married....They will probably live unmarried; besides they are now full of renunciation through my contact and busy with thoughts of Brahman!
>
> The two daughters are blondes, that is have golden hair, while the two nieces are brunettes, that is, of dark hair. They know all sorts of occupations. The nieces are not so rich, they conduct a kindergarten school; but the daughters do not earn....The daughters call me brother; and I address their mother as mother. All my things are at their place; and they look after them, wherever I may go.[12]

Ellen Hale's husband George Washington Hale, a Presbyterian by religious affiliation, was 64 years old at that time, retired from the hardware business he had inherited from his father. George Hale had amassed a fortune in his business and was wealthy enough to maintain a comfortable house in an affluent Chicago neighborhood; maintain two non-earning daughters; have a summer home in Kenosha, Wisconsin (until 1890); belong to the Union League Club; send his son to Yale; and take domestic and foreign trips from time to time. "Father Pope", as Swamiji used to call him, has never been portrayed as actively supporting Swamiji in his mission, but he made sure Swamiji was comfortable. His three-story brownstone house had ample room for parents, two daughters, two nieces, a blood-son occasionally, and now an adopted son, the itinerant Indian monk. Among Swamiji's published letters none was addressed to Mr. Hale, but while writing to the other members of the family he always inquired about his "Father Pope's" health. He had a deep reverence for him which he expressed when he wrote to Mary Hale after hearing about George Hale's death—"Mr. Hale was one of the best souls I met in life."[13]

Swamiji's relationship with his American sisters, "daughter Hales" (Mary and Harriet), and "niece McKindleys" (Harriet and Isabelle) was one of pure brotherly love and genuine friendship. Among these four women, Mary was the one Swamiji was closest to. He penned more letters to her than anyone in the West, with the exception of Sara Bull. Mrs. Bull, the widow of the famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull, met Swamiji in the spring of 1894 and later played a very important role in his life and mission. With Sara Bull he often discussed business and finance, but with Mary it was all thoughts, perceptions, sentiments, and brotherly advice. They were almost of the same age. She couldn't quite understand why her Indian brother was idolized by others. Sister Nivedita's explanation was probably the most appropriate one in this regard as she wrote to Mary Hale—"there is no comparison between your place in his [Swamiji's] heart & mine....I would sacrifice all, & thousands more, for a word of his but to him I am nothing personally...you are his sisters—I am only a disciple...The whole relationship between you is of equality—mine is inferiority."[14]

The Hales or McKindleys never became disciples of Swamiji. But they kept in constant touch with him throughout the rest of his life. They meticulously took care of his day-to-day needs when he was in Chicago, or forwarded his letters or parcels while he was away. He acknowledged his debt to his sisters in a letter—"I am ever grateful to you four sisters; to you I owe everything I have in this country. May you be ever blessed and happy. Wherever I be, you will always be remembered with the deepest gratitude and sincerest love."[15]

Swamiji's American family were not known to have made any financial contribution towards his work in India. As a matter of fact, during his second visit to the West, Betty Leggett, on her own initiative and without his knowledge, asked a large number of friends to donate $100 a year for the next ten years towards Swamiji's mission in India. Betty Leggett was the wife of Francis Leggett, owner of Ridgely Manor and one of Swamiji's closest friends, as we shall see. The Hale family was also the recipient of such a request, but politely declined to contribute. Swamiji was embarrassed and wrote to Sister Nivedita on February 15, 1900—"A very polite but cold letter came to her [Betty Leggett] in reply from Mrs. Hale, written by Mary, expressing their inability and assuring her of their love for me. I am afraid Mrs. Hale and Mary are displeased. But it was not my fault at all!!"[16]

George Hale died on February 8, 1900. Betty Leggett's fund-raising letter must have reached the Hales at an inappropriate time, when George Hale was ailing. In any case, it was not surprising to find a family not idolizing one of their own, even if he was the adopted one. The Hale family loved Swamiji as a brother or a son, not as a spiritual giant or an apostle of Hinduism. Swamiji also didn't expect reverence or respect from them, just unconditional love— and he got plenty of it. One of his staunchest supporters in America, Miss Josephine MacLeod, Betty Leggett's sister, wrote in 1922—"Without them [Hales] to have nourished and protected him that long year we might never have had him in our midst."[17]

Of all the letters on record that Swamiji wrote after he met the Hales, nearly one out of every five was written to one or more members of the extended Hale family.[18] He maintained with them a steady stream of faithful and uninhibited correspondence that remains our richest record of his American visit.

The door sill from the Hale residence is now on display at the Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat in Ganges, Michigan, and so is the porcelain tea set which Swamiji is said to have used while visiting the Hales. The keystone from the fireplace is at the Vivekananda Grove in Olema, near San Francisco. During the bone-chilling winter months in Chicago Swamiji must have spent a considerable amount of time in front of that fireplace, especially after dinner with a cigar in his hand.

Lincoln Park, where Dearborn Avenue (now North Dearborn Street) eventually ended, was only two blocks north of George Hale's house. Swamiji used to visit this park frequently. Swami Vishwananda, the head of the Chicago Vedanta Society from 1938 through 1965, received a letter in 1939 from Sarat Chandra Chakravorty, a disciple of Swamiji. The letter revealed an incident associated with Swamiji in this park, and it read:

> ...Swamiji once told me that one moonlit night when he was on the shore of Lake Michigan his mind began to merge in Brahman. Suddenly he saw Sri Ramakrishna and remembered the work for which he had come to this world. Then his mind came down and again turned toward the fulfillment of his mission. I recorded this in my diary, but I did not think it necessary to make it public; therefore I have not published it as yet. I am letting only you know....[19]

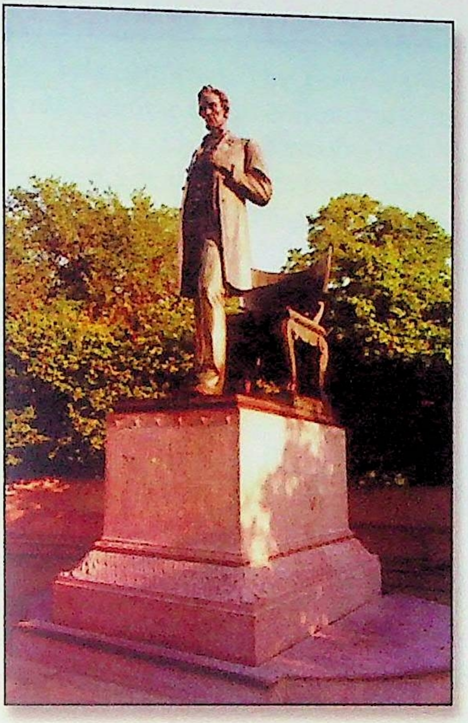
There is another interesting story associated with Swamiji in this park. He used to sit on the park benches to enjoy the scenic beauty of the surroundings. One day a young mother, impressed by his imposing appearance and demeanor, asked him if she could leave her six year old child in his charge while she went shopping. He readily agreed, and then on from time to time the mother would leave the little girl in his care in the park. Later, when Agnes Ewing was 15 or 16, her mother showed her a picture of Swamiji and asked if she remembered him. She certainly did. Swamiji's living image was so strongly embedded in the child's mind that, after being married and moving to Philadelphia, she was drawn to spiritual life and became a student of Swami Akhilananda who used to visit his devotees in the city.[20]

In addition to being a park at the lakefront, Lincoln Park had many other attractions at that time. This 250-acre park was bounded by Lake Michigan on the east; Clark Street on the west; North Avenue on the south, and Diversey Street on the north. *Picturesque Chicago and Guide to the World's Fair* describes Lincoln Park thus:

> There is embraced within this small piece of territory perhaps more attractions than can be found in any park of the country. Where nature left off, art began, and the two have contributed toward making Lincoln Park the most charming in the city. The visitor will be delighted with the undulating character of the ground, the gracefully winding and curving avenues, which stretch out in every direction; the beautiful lakes, the handsome bridges, the splendid foliage, the magnificent statuary, the gorgeous banks, beds and avenues of choicest flowers, the rare and wonderful shrubbery, the pretty little dells, knolls and nooks, that lie half concealed beneath the noble trees, and last, though not least, with the zoological collection, which has contributed in no small degree toward making Lincoln Park famous.[21]

Built in 1891-92, the Lincoln Park Conservatory had an impressive collection of exotic plants and trees brought from all over the globe. The Lincoln Park Zoo, another area landmark, began in 1868 with a gift of a pair of swans from Central Park, New York. By 1873 it had 19 different species of animals and birds. The zoo continually increased its number of inhabitants, and by 1893 had an impressive list which included a tiger from Swamiji's home state of Bengal.[22]

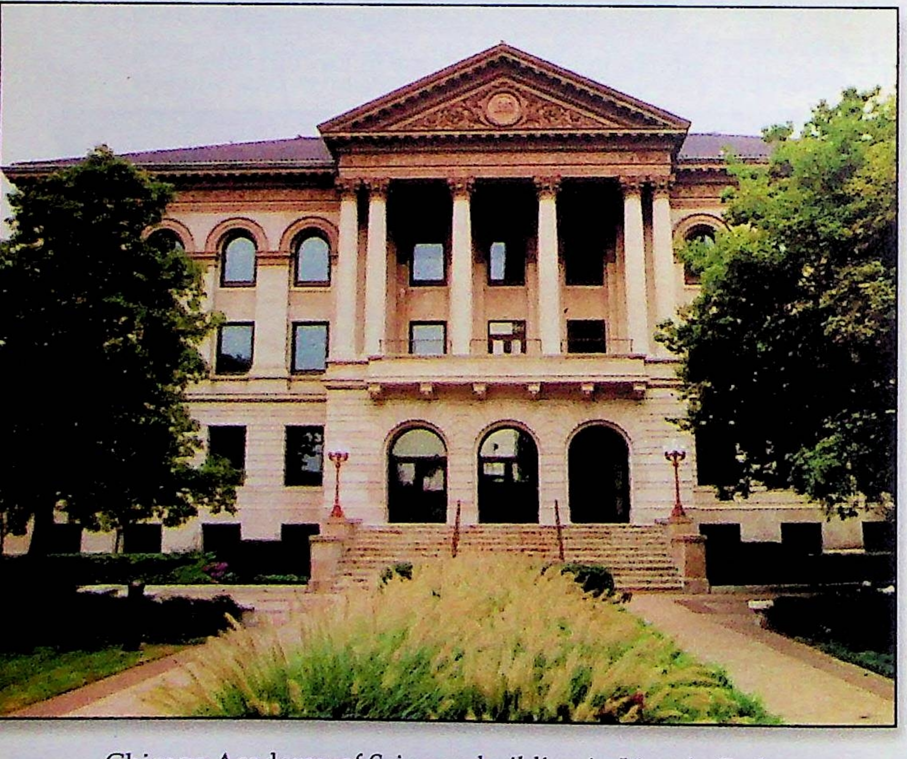
The Chicago Academy of Sciences building was there in Lincoln Park in 1894. The oldest science museum in the Midwest, it housed Chicago's first planetarium. It was built mainly through the generosity of Matthew Laflin, one of



Abraham Lincoln's statue in Lincoln Park

A view of Lincoln Park from North Street

Ulysses S. Grant's statue in Lincoln Park



Chicago Academy of Sciences building in Lincoln Park

Chicago's early businessmen. The building has undergone some interior remodeling but the Romanesque exterior still stands from Swamiji's days at Lincoln Park. As an ardent admirer of American advancements in the field of science and technology, Swamiji must have visited this building along with many other such institutions in Chicago to get a flavor of the tremendous growth in these fields.

The statuary in the park must have drawn his attention too. President Lincoln's statue, standing there in the park facing south along the centerline of North Dearborn Street, was first unveiled in 1887. Swamiji would have stood in front of the great American Emancipator and read the two bronze spheres bearing inscriptions composed of extracts from the Emancipation Proclamation. That would be right along the line of his thoughts. The Lincoln statue by Augustus Saint-Gaudens is considered his masterpiece. Looking at the statue, the viewer feels that Lincoln rose from his chair just a moment ago. The flower garden in front of the statue is a recent development, although there must have been other gardens in the park he enjoyed visiting in the summer of 1894. Sculpted by Louis T. Rebisso and unveiled in 1891, the equestrian portrait of President Ulysses S. Grant in Lincoln Park, overlooking Cannon Drive, is another landmark in Lincoln Park that must have intrigued Swamiji as a student of history.

Walking north from 1415 North Dearborn Street towards the park, one gets the feeling of following the footprints of Swamiji as he went for a stroll in the park. There are still several homes in the area that belong to the time period when he was there.

CHAPTER 6

THE WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

The World's Congress Auxiliary, held in Chicago from May 15 to October 28 of 1893, was the most prominent feature of the Columbian Exposition. "These Congresses embraced Woman's Progress, Public Press, Medicine and Surgery, Temperance, Moral and Social Reform, Commerce and Finance, Music, Literature, Education, Engineering, Art, Government, Science and Philosophy, Social and Economic Science, Labor, Religion, Sunday Rest, Public Health and Agriculture."[1] All these congresses of the auxiliary convened in the newly built Art Institute of Chicago on Michigan Avenue. If the World's Congresses were the golden crown of the World's Columbian Exposition, then the Parliament of Religions was the shining diamond in that crown. Some people thought that the Parliament, in its religious intellectuality, was even more attractive than the World's Fair with all its magnificent tokens of human endeavors in the field of art, industry, and science.

In the spring of 1891 Charles C. Bonney, President of the World's Congress Auxiliary, appointed the General Committee on Religion Congress with Rev. John H. Barrows, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, as its chairman. Bonney was a judge in Chicago who had proposed the Congress in 1889 and ultimately became its President in 1890. Early in June 1891, the General Committee sent out to the world a Preliminary Address announcing the purpose of the World's Parliament of Religions. The objectives proposed for the Parliament of Religions were:

1. To bring together in conference, for the first time in history, the leading representatives of the great historic religions of the world.

2. To show to man, in the most impressive way, what and how many important truths the various religions hold and teach in common.

3. To promote and deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among religious men of diverse faiths, through friendly converse and mutual good understanding, while not seeking to foster the temper of indifferentism, and *not striving to achieve any formal and outward unity* [italics by the author].

4. To set forth, by those most competent to speak, what are deemed the important distinctive truths held and taught by each religion, and by the various chief branches of Christendom.

5. To indicate the impregnable foundation of theism, and the reasons for man's faith in immortality, and thus to unite and strengthen the forces which are adverse to a materialistic philosophy of the universe.

6. To secure from leading scholars, representing the Brahman, Buddhist, Confucian, Parsee, Mohammedan, Jewish and other faiths, and from representatives of the various churches of Christendom, full and accurate statements of the spiritual and other effects of the religions which they hold upon the literature, art, commerce, government, domestic and social life of the people among whom these faiths have prevailed.

7. To inquire what light each religion has afforded, or may afford, to the other religions of the world.

8. To set forth, for permanent record to be published to the world, an accurate and authoritative account of the present condition and outlook of religion among the leading nations of the earth.

9. To discover, from competent men, what light religion has to throw on the great problems of the present age,

> especially the important questions connected with temperance, labor, education, wealth and poverty.
>
> 10. To bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly fellowship, in the hope of securing permanent international peace.[2]

Great objectives—without a doubt!

The justification for having a Parliament of Religions as an adjunct of the World's Columbian Exposition was given by Rev. Barrows:

> Since faith in a Divine Power to whom men believe they owe service and worship has been like the sun, a life-giving and fructifying potency in man's intellectual and moral development; since Religion lies back of Hindu literature with its marvelous and mystique developments; of the European Art, whether in the form of Grecian statues or Gothic cathedrals; and of American liberty and the recent uprisings of men in behalf of a juster social condition; and since it is as clear as the light that the Religion of Christ has led to many of the chief and noblest developments of our modern civilization, it did not appear that Religion, any more than Education, Art, or Electricity, should be excluded from the Columbian Exposition.[3]

Rev. Barrows quoted Tennyson's poem:

I dreamed
That stone by stone I reared a sacred fane,
A temple; neither Pagod, Mosque, nor Church,
But loftier, simpler, always open-doored
To every breath from Heaven; and Truth and Peace
And Love and Justice came and dwelt therein.

and said—"These lines from 'Akbar's Dream,' one of Tennyson's latest poems, indicate how the laureate, who regarded the proposal of a Parliament of Religions at Chicago as a noble idea, brooded much, in his last days, over the oneness of human need and spiritual aspiration after God."[4]

It was a pity the Poet Laureate of England died in 1892 and could not see "Akbar's Dream" materialize nearly three hundred years after the death of the Indian Emperor who had staged his own version of a "Parliament of Religions." In *The Arena* of December 1894 F. Max Muller said—"...the spirit which moved the Emperor Akbar (1542-1605) to invite representatives of different creeds to meet at Delhi, was certainly the same spirit which stirred the hearts of those who originated the meeting at Chicago." Max Muller further added—"Akbar's idea was to found a new religion and it was for that purpose he wished to become acquainted with the prominent religions of the world." Emperor Akbar's aim was to bring about a harmony of religions by combining all that was best in the existing faiths. History indicates that the Emperor did not have much success in the pursuit of his lofty ideals.

More than ten thousand letters and forty thousand documents were sent out all over the world. The responses were equally numerous. The most earnest friends supporting the Parliament were the leading Jewish scholars of England, Germany and America. They, more than anyone else in this world, knew from their own experience the supreme importance of tolerance and harmony amongst religions.

There were signs of dissent as well from individuals and religious groups from various parts of the world. The Archbishop of Canterbury's comment, a significant one which represented the voice of the Anglican Church, was:

> The difficulties which I myself feel are not questions of distance and convenience, but rest on the fact that the Christian religion is the one religion. I do not understand how that religion can be regarded as a member of a Parliament of Religions without assuming the equality of the other intended members and the parity of their position and claims.[5]

What a preposterous idea! The Archbishop refused to take part, or send any representative. In spite of that, Dr. A. W. Momerie

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What a preposterous idea! The Archbishop refused to take part, or send any representative. In spite of that, Dr. A. W. Momerie of London did attend. Rev. Momerie was a professor at King's College, London, and for a long time a preacher at the Foundling Asylum. In intellectual strength and organizational energy he was recognized as one of the foremost clergymen of the Church of England. The Presbyterian General Assembly also called the impending Parliament "uncalled for, misleading and hurtful."[6] The Christian Endeavor Society boycotted the Parliament. Russia refused to send a representative, although Prince Wolkonsky, who later became an ardent admirer of Swamiji, did represent the Russian Orthodox Church. The clergymen from Hongkong accused Rev. Barrows of "planning treason against the Church." The Sultan of Turkey also refused to be represented. The Methodist bishops excused themselves saying they were too busy, without formally boycotting it. Thus a convention to establish a "harmony of religions" started with a somewhat disharmonious chord.

The World's Parliament of Religions, however, did receive the sanction of the Catholic hierarchy of the U.S.[7] The Archbishop approved the Congress by a formal vote and appointed Bishop J. J. Keane of the Catholic University of Washington as the official representative. Catholics were the largest religious group in Chicago, if not in the whole country.

The selected list of some of the members of the Advisory Council from India were: Rev. Jani Ali, Mr. J. J. Modi, and Consul Henry Ballantine of Bombay; Hon. Maya Das and Mr. Mohan Deva of Lahore; Rev. J. Heiricks, G. S. Iyer, the editor of *The Hindu*, and Mr. B. B. Nagarkar of Bombay; Rev. J. N. Ogilvie, Consul General Samuel Merrill, Prof. Alexander Tomory, and Mr. P. C. Mozoomdar of Calcutta. Additional Advisory Councilors and friends of the Parliament from India were: Rev. G. L. Wharton of Betaspeer, Mobed R. K. Modi of Bombay, Rev. J. Lazarus and Mr. S. Satthianadkan of Madras, Rev. John McLaurin of Bangalore, Rev. K. S. McDonald of Calcutta, and Rev. J. E. Padfield of Masulipatam.[8] It was probably G. S. Iyer who made the plans of the Parliament generally known in India through articles in his newspaper *The Hindu*, and that was how Swamiji came to know about it.

At 10 a.m. on September 11 the Parliament opened. The Columbian Liberty Bell in Jackson Park rang with ten strokes, representing the ten major religions* of the world. The Art Institute, though actually called the Memorial Art Palace at that time, was packed with people representing every walk of American life and culture. Although the Parliament was the biggest event that day, or in the subsequent days, there were other meetings going on in the various halls of the Art Institute. There were three sessions of the Parliament each day: the morning session at 10 a.m., the afternoon session at 2.30 p.m., and finally the evening session at 8 p.m. Once the Hall of Columbus, the major venue for the Parliament sessions, was full, the neighboring Hall of Washington or other halls were required to contain the overflow. The two meetings then went side by side, listening alternately to the same address. The *Chicago Daily News* reported on September 13 that there was a very large crowd in the Hall of Columbus the day before, and an overflow meeting was held in Hall III. The *Chicago Inter Ocean* reported other activities scheduled in the Hall of Washington, at least until September 23. So the hall probably was not available for the Parliament overflow meetings the entire time. Sometimes smaller groups had to move out of the Hall of Washington to other halls in order to make room for the overflow meetings. Such was the case on September 14. The *Inter Ocean* reported on September 15—"Interest in the Parliament of Religions grows apace. Yesterday morning and afternoon overflow meetings were held in Washington Hall, and the programme given in the adjoining Hall of Columbus was repeated to large audiences." The United Brethren group scheduled to meet in the Hall of Washington at 10 a.m. on September 14 had to vacate the hall. This process continued off and on throughout the entire time. Regarding the last day of the Parliament the *Chicago Tribune* said on September 28—

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* Judaism, Mohammedanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Catholicism, and Protestantism (including the Greek Church)

"Hall of Washington, where the overflow meeting was held, and the entire program repeated." While the Hall of Columbus had a capacity of 4,000,[9] the combined audience in both these major halls could reach 7,000.[10]

The Honorable Cardinal Gibbons, the highest prelate of the Roman Catholic Church in the Western Hemisphere, opened the meeting with a prayer. The following representatives from India, along with those from other countries, were on the platform around the Cardinal: Siddhu Ram and Jinda Ram* from Punjab, two Mohammedans; Virchand A. Gandhi from Bombay, Honorary Secretary of the Jain Association of India; P. C. Mozoomdar of the Brahmo-Samaj from Calcutta; H. Dharmapala from Colombo, General Secretary of the Maha-Bodhi Society and Delegate of the Southern Buddhist Church of Ceylon; Prof. C. N. Chakravarti from Allahabad, a prominent Theosophist; Swami Vivekananda; B. B. Nagarkar of the Brahmo-Samaj from Bombay; Jeanne Sorabji from Bombay, a Parsee converted to Christianity, and Rev. Maurice Phillips, a missionary from Madras.[11]

President Bonney in his welcome address said—"we seek in this Congress to unite all Religion against all irreligion; to make the golden rule the basis of this union; and to present to the world the substantial unity of many religions in the good deeds of religious life." Swamiji was invited to speak in the morning, but declined the offer. In the afternoon, Swamiji was introduced after Rev. A. W. Momerie of London had finished his speech. Swamiji did not come prepared with a written speech. He later wrote—"of course my heart was fluttering and my tongue was nearly dried up. I was so nervous and could not venture to speak in the morning."[12] This was not the first time Swamiji was speaking in front of an American audience. He had done that before in Annisquam, Saratoga

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* Whereas Rev. John Barrows designated them as Mohammedans in his book, Siddhu Ram and Jinda Ram identified themselves as Vedic Missionaries in a letter to the editor of *The Republic* of St. Louis, Missouri. The letter was published in the newspaper on December 10, 1893.

Springs, and other places in the east. But this was different. This was the mother of all conventions. "Imagine a hall below and a huge gallery above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women [being in an admittedly nervous state, Swamiji obviously had miscalculated the size of his audience] representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform learned men of all the nations of the earth"—he wrote in the same letter. But once Swamiji stood up and faced the audience, with *Devi Saraswati* (the goddess of learning) on his tongue and Sri Ramakrishna in his heart, all his apprehensions faded away into oblivion. In his first landmark speech, Swamiji set the stage in accordance with the central theme of the Parliament, which was the harmony of religions.

Rev. L. P. Mercer wrote in his book the *Review of the World's Religious Congresses:*

> Swami Vivekananda of Bombay, India, arose, a magnificent figure of manly beauty, in his orange robe and turban, with striking, strong, and reposeful countenance, and said: "Sisters and Brothers of America," whereupon there arose a peal of applause in acknowledgment of the originality of the salutation, and perhaps not less as testifying interest in the personality of the speaker.[13]

With reference to that Rev. Barrows also said—"When Vivekananda addressed the audience as 'sisters and brothers of America,' there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes."[14] Actually, Rev. Barrows took the widely quoted sentence, word for word, out of the *Chicago Herald*'s report of September 12. Complete texts of Swamiji's first and subsequent speeches in the Parliament can be found in the first volume of the *Complete Works*. The *Chicago Record* of September 12 came out with a very poor sketch of Swamiji sitting in a chair. The newspaper provided the caption "Swami Dvivi Kananda" under the sketch, but there was hardly any similarity. The *Inter Ocean* also had a sketch on September 13.

After the first day, Swamiji did not speak at the Hall of Columbus until September 15. According to the *Inter Ocean* of September 15 under "Today's Programme," he was scheduled to speak during the afternoon session. He spoke extemporaneously, as he did on most occasions, and was the last speaker of the afternoon session. Actually, all of Swamiji's six speeches at the Parliament were during the afternoon or evening sessions. That is one reason why the evening papers, and there were at least five major ones, could not cover them. He narrated the now-well-known fable of the "frog in the well" under the general topic "Why We Disagree." It was enthusiastically received by the audience with loud applause according to the *Chicago Herald* of the following day.

The Complete Works, Vol. 1, has Swamiji's short speech "Why We Disagree" extracted word for word from the *Chicago Herald* of September 16. Rev. J. T. Sunderland, a Unitarian minister from Michigan, specifically quoted the same speech in his commentary on the World's Parliament of Religions. Since his version of Swamiji's speech was slightly different than that presented in the *Herald*, it is quoted here in its entirety along with the Reverend's comments leading to it:

> A simple little story was related by one of the speakers that was very telling as a rebuke to bigotry, and as a plea for breadth and brotherhood. The narrator was a learned Hindu. The story was about a frog in a well.
>
> We had been listening to a particularly narrow paper by a Catholic theologian, claiming for his Church the possession of the one only divine religion of the world. The time had come to close the session, but, as a last thing, this distinguished Hindu was called upon by the president for an address of five minutes. He came forward and said:
>
> "I will detain you only long enough to tell you a very simple story, which I think will contain an explanation of the narrowness which are so often seen among us, which

are so very unlovely wherever they are seen, and which do so much to keep the disciples of the different religions of the world apart.

"There was once a frog that lived in a deep well. How he got there we need not stop to inquire: it is enough for us to know that he had never known any other home. He fed upon the worms and other forms of life that he found in the well, and was fat and sleek and contented, believing that his lot was the most favored and his home the most wonderful in the world.

"One day another frog, whose home had been the sea, by chance hopped into the well. The first frog was disposed to be distant, and offended at the intruder. But presently they fell into conversation. 'Where did you come from?' asked the first. 'From the sea,' replied the other. 'The sea! what is that? Surely it cannot be as large as this well.' And, as he said this, he hopped across to the other side to show the stranger how great the well was. 'Yes!' answered the stranger : 'the sea is very large indeed,—many, many times larger than all the space you have here.' Then he tried to describe the sea and the vast world outside the well. But the first frog was indignant, and hopped again, and still again, across the well to help his companion to realize how very great its extent was. And when the other still persisted in declaring that the sea was larger, and the world outside the well was more wonderful, the frog, whose home had always been there, grew angry, and declared that such utterances could be made only by one who was either ignorant or liar.'

"This is the story of the frog in the well," said the Hindu. "Do you not see its lesson? Alas! we are all so much like the poor frog. I live in my narrow well; you live in yours; the follower of each religion lives in his. And, if anyone coming from the outside dares to tell us of a world larger than the narrow walls of our creed or our caste or our church or our religion, we are offended, and

> straightway set him down as a liar. Oh that we might all climb up out of our dark wells, and see how large and glorious is the real world of God and humanity and truth and religion! Then, I am sure, we should cease to quarrel. Then I think we should begin to act like brothers."[15]

On the ninth day, September 19, Swamiji presented his major speech in the Parliament, the one on Hinduism. The *Chicago Herald* of September 20 called his speech "one of the most interesting features of the day" and published a sketch of Swamiji which, just like the previous ones, did not do justice to his handsome features. At this point one could wonder why Swamiji's likeness, unlike those of other delegates, appeared as a caricature. Since he was not pre-registered, it is possible that the newspapers did not have his engraving in advance and had to rely on crude sketches. The *Inter Ocean* of September 20 did not reproduce his speech in its entirety, but did describe the atmosphere that prevailed:

> **Great Crowds Assemble to Hear Vivekananda....**
>
> Great crowds of people, the most of whom were women, pressed around the doors leading to the Hall of Columbus an hour before the time stated for opening the afternoon session, for it had been announced that Swami Vivekananda, the popular Hindu monk who looks so much like McCullough's* Othello, was to speak.
>
> Ladies, ladies, everywhere filled the great auditorium. They gave no outward sign of impatience through the delivery of three classic essays which separated them from Vivekananda's eloquence, but it was evident from the applause which greeted the Oriental about 5 o'clock, as in his orange garb he arose to speak, that had he spoken

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* The reporter was probably referring to John McCullough (1832-1885), the Irish-born actor who came to the U.S. in 1847 and toured the country staging various plays from 1873-1884.

first instead of last some of the great audience might not have been present at the close of the session.

The speech on Hinduism was Swamiji's by far the longest and most significant one in the Parliament. While during his first speech he had opened the door a crack to let people get a glimpse of the "mother of religions," this time he opened it wide for everyone to savor its richness and profundity, and be immersed in its catholicity and universality. Towards the end of his speech he also laid out his concept of a universal religion. "It will be a religion," he said—"which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be created in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature." Obviously Swamiji had Vedanta in mind as the model, "the worship of spirit by the spirit."

The *Chicago Tribune*, which usually reported the Parliament proceedings beginning on the first page of its second half (Part 2), opened its September 20 report by saying:

> Two men, who differ as widely in personality as in faith, stand out clearly in the proceedings of the Parliament of Religions of yesterday. The first of these is a clergyman of the Established Church of England, the second a Hindoo monk, a member of the oldest monastic order of the world. The first wore a clerical suit of conventional black; the second was girt with a robe of vivid orange and wore upon his head a yellow turban. The English rector talked of music as the golden art which should lead men upward to see the spiritual and to realize the divine. The Hindoo preached peace and love as a doctrine which would yet bring all mankind into harmony....
>
> In the afternoon Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu monk, was the orator, who, with his quick eloquence and graceful manner, caught the sympathy of the audience

> as Dr. Haweis had in the morning. He spoke of the patronizing way in which he and his fellow Orientals had been treated by some of the speakers at the parliament.
>
> "We have been told to accept Christianity," he said "because Christian nations are prosperous. We look at England, the richest Christian nation in the world. Why is she rich and prosperous? Because she has her foot upon the neck of 250,000,000 Asiatics. We read history and we see everywhere that Christianity has conquered prosperity with blood and with the sword. At such a price the mild and gentle Hindoo will have none of it." The Hindu monk went on to rehearse the beauties of the ancient faith of which he is an apostle and to declare that only when peace and love govern the actions of all men was a church universal within the realm of possibility.

Swamiji, apparently, had stirred up the clergymen even prior to his September 20 speech. The *Tribune*, like other newspapers, printed Swamiji's speech where it should be according to the chronological sequence. It quoted Swamiji's comments immediately prior to his speech: "I have heard the creed of the Moslem applauded, when today the Moslem sword is carrying destruction into India. Blood and the sword are not for the Hindu, whose religion is based on the law of love."

On September 20, Swamiji was to speak again at the end of the session on "Religion not the crying need of India." His speech was previously unannounced and extemporaneous, and came as a result of some comments made by the last scheduled speaker of the session on the subject of Christian missions in the East. The audience burst out in applause at his appearance. He denounced the Christian missionaries for despising the sacred tradition of the Hindu, for building churches and preaching sectarian creeds and distributing food in a famine at the price of conversion. In short, he laid it on them. Swamiji said he was not feeling very well, but the audience urged him to continue—and he did.

Some Christian leaders accepted these hard reproaches with good grace. Bishop Keane, the Catholic representative to the Parliament said:

> From my heart I indorse the denunciation that was hurled forth last night against the system of pretended charity that offered food to the hungry Hindus at the cost of their conscience and their faith... let him go on criticising us Christians; we do not hear half enough of this.... And by this criticism Vivekananda can only stir us and sting us into better teachings and better doings in the great work of Christ in the world, I for one will be profoundly grateful to our friend, the great Hindu monk.[16]

Unfortunately, this and other such statements at the Parliament indicative of his liberality probably cost Bishop Keane his job as the Rector of the Catholic University.

Parallel to the meeting in the Hall of Columbus there were sessions in Hall III, towards the north end of the Institute, where papers of a more scientific nature were read. These sessions started on September 15, the fifth day, and lasted until September 27 with gaps on September 16, 17, 18, 19, and 26. Here, on September 22, Swamiji addressed the session once in the morning and once in the afternoon. In the morning he spoke at the "Conference on Orthodox Hinduism and the Vedanta Philosophy," and in the afternoon at the "Conference on the Modern Religions of India." These side sessions provided the audience with an opportunity to directly interact with Swamiji, their favorite. With reference to his speech on Orthodox Hinduism *The Independent* magazine of New York wrote on September 28:

> Swami Vivekananda a Brahmin Sannyasi or monk, spoke on the teachings of his religion and answered questions put by the audience. Hundreds of questions were asked by men and women of various creeds, Catholic and Protestant clergymen, Theosophists, rationalists, etc. The hall was crowded, and immense enthusiasm prevailed;

and yet between this heterogeneous audience and this pagan teacher there was no disagreeable friction whatever.

On September 23 Swamiji again spoke at the follow-up session of the subject from the previous afternoon and conducted a "Conference on the subject of the Rinzai Zen of Japanese Buddhism". On the afternoon of September 25 he spoke for the last time at the Scientific Section on "Essence of the Hindu Religion."

Swamiji's relationship with the audience was "love at first sight." After the first day, therefore, it had become the general practice for the session managers to save his speech until the end of the sessions as a way to hold the audience. Such was also the case on September 26 when he spoke at the end of the evening session on "Buddhism, the Fulfillment of Hinduism." But this time it was Dharmapala who invited him to "criticise" Buddhism because he would be impartial. The *Inter Ocean* did not list Swamiji's name as a participant in the "Buddhist presentation" that evening. On September 27 the newspaper commented—"Vivekananda is always received with applause in the Parliament and as he stepped forward...he was received with generous enthusiasm." While announcing his upcoming lecture at Streator (presented in the next chapter), Illinois, the Streator *Free Press* said on October 4:

> In this assemblage of notables [at the Parliament] perhaps the most striking and commanding figure was that of the Hindoo monk Suami[*sic*] Vivekananda. It is stated by an eye-witness that when the yellow-robed Hindoo entered the Parliament hall, it was like the memorable entrance of Roscoe Conklin* [Conkling] into the Republican convention, the applause was so tumultuous that business had to be suspended.

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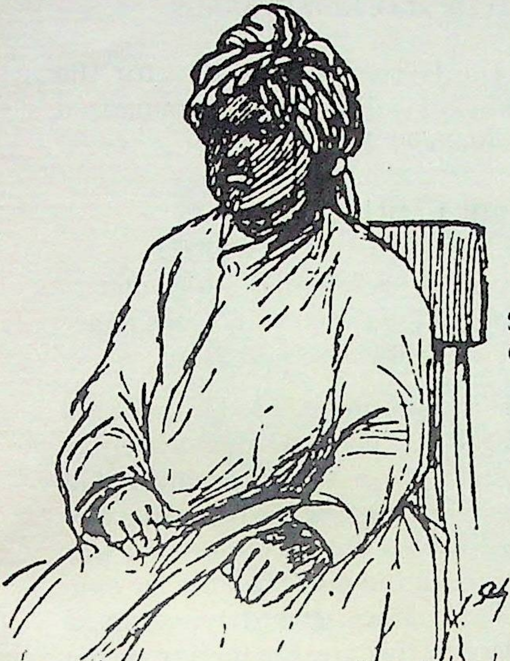
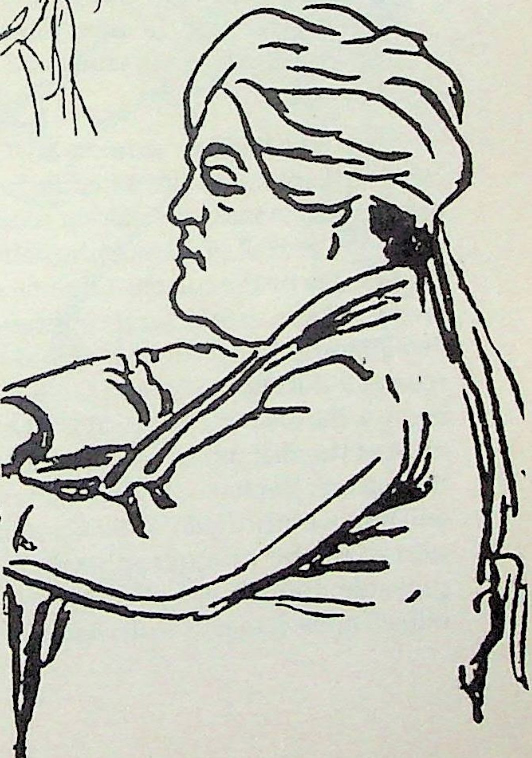
*Roscoe Conkling (1829-1888), first as a Republican Congressman and then as a Senator, had earned a nationwide reputation as a picturesque orator with a commanding presence.



Swami Vivekananda;
Chicago Record of September 12, 1893

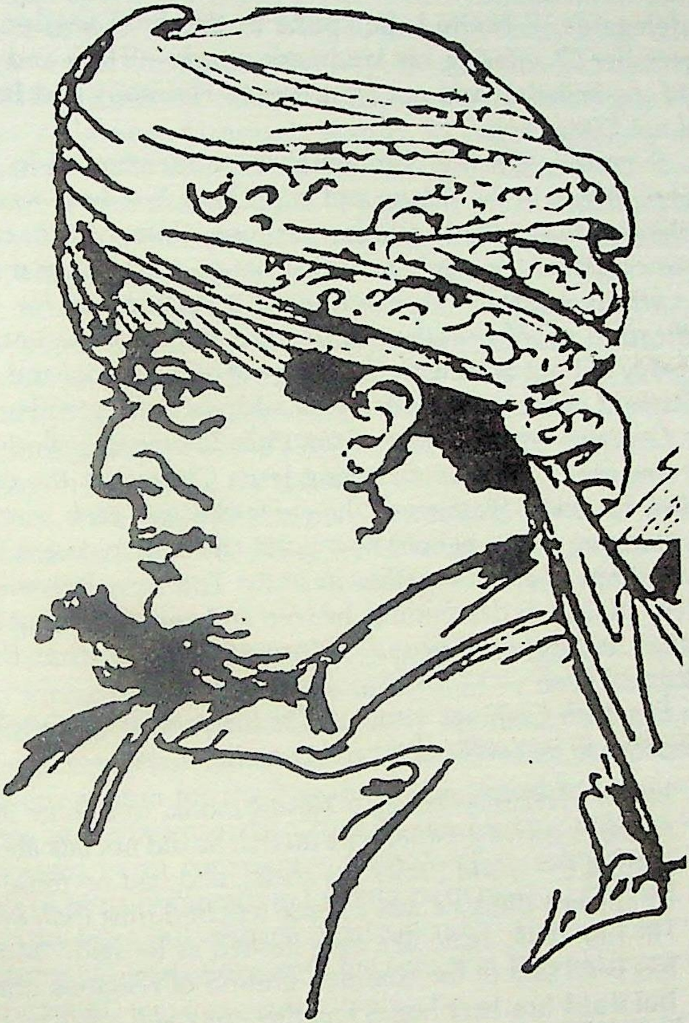


Swami Vivekananda;
Inter Ocean of September 13, 1893

September 27 was the last scheduled day for the Parliament. The mood of the closing day was best summarized by the *Chicago Herald* of September 28:

> **DAY FOR CHRISTIANS**
>
> NAZARENE'S FAITH DULY SET FORTH
>
> Orientals Were Absent From Yesterday's Morning and Afternoon Sessions of the Parliament of Religions as Participants, and Ministers Hold Sway.
>
> Ministers of the Christian faith prepared and delivered all the papers read at the parliament of religions yesterday morning and afternoon. The large audience which sat in the Hall of Columbus were regaled with a variety of subjects. The most noticeable event of the session was the absence of the priests and monks from the far east. Buddha, and Brahma and Confucius, who have occupied such an important place in this great gathering of the creeds, were for the time forgotten. The sombre color of the rostrum was not enlivened by the variegated garbs of the orient.

It is not hard to surmise that the Orientals were very carefully kept out of the schedule for the final day. They were only invited to make the closing comments during the evening session. The Hall of Columbus platform that was adorned on the first day by the colorful Oriental delegates had lost its color on the last day, at least for the morning and afternoon sessions. Swamiji was conspicuous by his absence. The color probably returned during the "grand farewell session of the evening", because the *Chicago Tribune* said—"On the platform were seated most of the distinguished delegates to the Parliament. Among them were: Virchand A. Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda..." This will remove any doubt Sister Gargi might have had when she said—"In the photograph taken on September 27...it is probable, though not at present certain, that Swamiji does indeed appear, seated with regal unconcern in the second row



Swami Vivekananda;
Chicago Herald of September 20, 1893

of delegates."[17] Invited, he spoke at the final session on September 27 uttering his landmark words—"Help and not Fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."

Swamiji's closing comments were mentioned in the papers, at least in the *Tribune* and *Inter Ocean*, but there was no mention of the audience reaction to those comments. His bold denunciation of the subtle as well as not-so-subtle pleas made by various speakers throughout the Parliament for the unification of all religions under the flag of Christianity probably did not meet with the approval of the media and the Parliament officials. In his farewell address on September 27 Rev. George Dana Boardman from Philadelphia did allude to this concept of unification, saying Jesus Christ was the only unifier. He said—"Fathers of the contemplative east; sons of the executive west—behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. The New Jerusalem, the city of God, is descending, heaven and earth chanting the eternal hallelujah chorus."[18] More comments from Rev. Boardman later.

Elizabeth Cumings wrote in *The Independent* on October 5 referring to Swamiji's closing statement:

> Suami Vivekananda[*sic*], a Hindu monk, in orange and crimson, was of another type [in that he did not talk about uniting the world under the cross], and had no mind to let any one think he was a shade less Buddhist than ever. His full, dark, agate-like eyes flashed as he said: "Much has been said of the common ground of religious unity. But if any one here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of these religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, 'Brother, yours is an impossible hope.'"

Responding to the same speech Rev. Barrows wrote—"Swami Vivekananda was always heard with interest by the Parliament, but very little approval was shown to some of the sentiments expressed in his closing address." Was it because Swamiji spoke the harsh truth which Christendom didn't expect, or want, to hear? With all said and done, many of the promoters of the Parliament were disappointed to find that Christianity did not unequivocally prove its superiority over other religions. Although Bishop Keane's secretary and President of the Scientific Section, Merwin Marie-Snell, wrote about Swamiji that he was—"by far the most important and ...beyond question the most popular and influential man in the Parliament.... was received with greater enthusiasm than any other speaker, Christian or Pagan"—not every Chicago newspaper came out and expressed similar sentiments. The *Inter Ocean* of January 1, 1894 said: "Of the delegates from Pagan Lands, Mr. Mozomdar stands the best exponent of the advancing religion of the old East." Why? —"He surpasses the Unitarian in his love for the Jesus of Nazareth." Editor of *The Outlook,* a Christian Union publication, said about Mr. Pratap Mozoomdar in its December 23, 1893 issue: "He has never heard one word from him [Mozoomdar] which was not heartily Christian."

So, that was it! Swamiji was purposely ignored because his "foreign-made heart, manufactured in the Himalayan Mountains," was not considered by the media as Christian enough to warrant honorable mention. In reality, his fondness and admiration for the Nazarene was probably a thousand times more intense than that of Mr. Mozoomdar, as was expressed in his comment—"Had I lived in Palestine, in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, I would have washed His feet, not with my tears, but with my heart's blood!"[19] Thomas a Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, along with the *Gita*, was Swamiji's constant companion.

What baffled Christendom most was the attitude of the representatives from the East, who had abundant admiration, love and respect for the Man from Galilee, but viewed Christianity as a mixture of greed, immorality, bigotry, and vicious customs which the representatives from the East dreaded to see entrenched in the moral life of their people. The reason for this was eloquently addressed by Purushottam Rao Telang in *The Forum* of December 1894:

> Who by force brought the Africans to your shores? What became of the aborigines of Australia? How was India conquered, and by whom? Who snatched the kingdom Hawaii from the Queen of those Islands? Who were the Crusaders? Who burned people at the stake and invented torturing-machines? Who were those who wished to burn Galileo for expounding the theory of the earth's motion? Who acknowledged slavery and practised it for many centuries, until it was stopped with a great deal of bloodshed by the liberty-loving Americans, and then rather for economic than purely religious motives? Christian history is full of [such] instances, and... these facts have much to do with the Hindu prejudices against Christianity.

Telang echoed Swamiji's plea to send to India "machinery instead of missionaries."

Swamiji's overwhelming success in the Parliament of Religions and later did not come without a price tag. Richard Hughes Seager wrote:

> Orthodox Hindus began to challenge Vivekananda's credentials [although Prof. John Henry Wright, had said—"Asking your credentials Swami is like asking the sun for its right to shine."]; Theosophists expressed resentment over his success with the public. Majumdar, moreover, was reported to be spreading slanderous rumors about his behavior in the United States—eating beef, smoking cigars, and attending parties with American women.[20]

In a letter to Ramakrishnananda, Swamiji wrote—"I met here Mr. Mazoomdar. He was very cordial at first, but when the whole Chicago population began to flock to me in overwhelming numbers, then grew the canker in his mind!…The priests tried their utmost to snub me."[21] Pratap Mozoomdar's effort to slander him was also reflected in his letter to Mary Hale—"Mazoomdar has gone back to Calcutta and is preaching that Vivekananda is committing every sin under the sun in America....This is your America's *wonderful spiritual man*!... I am sorry for poor Mazoomdar that he should stoop so low!"[22]

The orthodox Christians were not far behind in criticising and condemning him. On October 5 the *Interior*, a Presbyterian magazine published from Chicago, wrote an editorial entitled—"An Honest Hindoo." The article blasted Swamiji for his criticism of the Christian missionaries. Referring to this article he wrote to his Madras disciples:

> The criticism you mention of the *Interior* is not to be taken as the attitude of the American people. That paper is almost unknown here, and belongs to what they call a 'blue-nose Presbyterian paper,' very bigoted.…That paper wanted a little notoriety by attacking a man who was being lionized by society. That trick is well known here, and they do not think anything of it. Of course, our Indian missionaries may try to make capital out of it....I pity them—if their means of living fine lives in India is cut down by the influx of oriental religions here.…Well, when I am in the pond, I must bathe thoroughly.[23]

Swamiji took all these in stride and wrote in the same letter—"Still all the 'blue-noses' are not ungentlemanly. The American people, and many of the clergy, are very hospitable to me."

The sarcastic and derogatory article he referred to clearly shows that his criticism of the missionaries hit a sensitive chord with the Presbyterians, and they responded with the venom of a cobra. The "Hindoo monk" was familiar with this brand of venom and handled it easily with his characteristic benevolence and grace. The Catholics accepted the criticism with a positive attitude, as discussed earlier, but the

Presbyterians did not. While showering criticism the editor, however, reluctantly admitted that Swamiji was the "man who of all speakers on the platform of the Parliament awoke most uproarious applause and was called back again and again." Coming from a non-partisan camp, a hostile one at that, it is a significant bit of information that will reinforce the historicity of the sensation he had caused in the Parliament.

The Presbyterians of Chicago had the financial power behind them as evident from the *Chicago Mail*'s summary quoted in William Stead's book *If Christ Came to Chicago*. It revealed that only 1.8% of the 687,341 members of the Churches of various denominations were Presbyterians, but they incurred 13% of the total Church expenses. Seventy-three percent was Catholic, probably the poorest segment of the society, but they spent only 31% of the total. The wealth of the city was mainly in the hands of the non-Catholics.[24] It was the orthodox Presbyterian and Baptist clergymen who were leading the campaign against Swamiji, and most of them were heavily invested in setting up missions in the East and were furious at Swamiji's criticism of the Christian missionaries.

A July 1894, editorial in the *Missionary Review of the World* later followed the *Interior*'s suit and attacked Swamiji with its fangs showing, while spewing venom:

> Rev. R. A. Hume, of India, has replied in a kindly yet most convincing way to some of these criticisms of Mr. Norendra Nath Dutt, who has assumed in this country the name of Vivekananda, and the reply has been published as a leaflet by the American Board and can be had at its publication rooms [the exchange of views on the subject of the Christian missionaries between Rev. Hume and Swamiji followed Swamiji's appearance in Detroit in March, 1894, and is extensively covered in the *New Discoveries*.[25]] This Hindu, who is not, as has been claimed, a Brahman, appeared before his audiences in gorgeous robes of rich materials and bright colors, and stated that he was nothing but a poor mendicant monk.

> We should have been glad to have had him tell us why he appeared in that garb. It was certainly not because it was the garb of his order. The regalia of the *swami*, or Indian ascetic, such as he claimed to be, consist of a loin cloth and a yellow mantle. At some of the great festivals these fakirs appear in procession absolutely naked. The gorgeous robe of this Hindu was simply to catch the American fancy and appeal to the sentimentalism of his hearers. But his speech was about as accurate a representation of orthodox Hinduism as were his robes.

It was obviously in deference to a sophisticated and cultured audience, and also to the cooler climate of this country, that Swamiji chose to wear an outfit which was definitely in line with the color of his order. The robe and turban were actually given by the Raja of Khetri before Swamiji left for America. In this regard he might also have been following some advice mentioned in a letter to Alasinga Perumal in August of 1893:

> I must first go and buy some clothing in Boston. If I am to live longer here, my quaint dress will not do. People gather in the streets by hundreds to see me [because of the quaint dress]. So what I want is to dress myself in a long black coat, and keep a red robe and turban to wear when I lecture. This is what the ladies advise me to do, and they are the rulers here, and I must have their sympathy.

It would probably have pleased the editor if Swamiji had worn his typical Baranagar Math outfit, but in that case he probably would have been arrested for indecent exposure or caught pneumonia. Would this type of commentary be likely to bother someone who always remained unperturbed by both applause and slander and had once written to a devotee—"I long, oh! I long for my rags, my shaven head, my sleep under the trees, and my food from begging"? Definitely not!

Other Asian delegates also criticised the missionaries almost as much as Swamiji did, if not more. But being the most popular Eastern delegate he took the brunt of the attack. If they could discredit Swamiji, they could convince the American people not to pay any heed to his message. Or so they thought!

A few newspapers commented on the bigoted remarks of the Christian delegates. On September 23, the *Every Saturday* from Elgin, a western suburb of Chicago, wrote in its editorial—"The utterances of many of the Christian speakers at the religious congress tend to make one feel as though civility and charity were not characteristic of the Christian religion. Inasmuch as this is a Christian country and that it is the host of the occasion, some of the bigoted and ill bred remarks of such men as Joseph Cook, are, to say the least, an insult to every guest from abroad. Our friends from the Orient, the followers of Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed and the other religious teachers, will get a very erroneous impression of what Christianity pretends to be, and ought to be, and, in a measure, is, if they judge by the barbarism and bigotry of some of its false prophets." The *Springfield Journal* of September 23 also chastised Rev. Cook by saying—"It is a sad commentary on professed Christians that all the intolerance thus far exhibited in the Parliament of Religions has come from them, and not from the 'heathen' for whom they are wont to express so much scorn. These scholarly foreigners were invited here to express their views and are entitled to the fullest courtesy. They should be protected from the insults of the Joseph Cooks and other opinionated bigots."

The *Chicago Tribune* of September 21 depicted Rev. Cook as a member of the Church Militant group and as the representative of the orthodox Protestant Christianity. Ironically, Keshab Chandra Sen, the Brahmo leader, had taken him to visit Sri Ramakrishna when Rev. Cook was in Calcutta in 1882.[26] It seems that the visit with the sage from Dakshineshwar, whose life was the ultimate symbol of religious tolerance, did not do the Reverend any good whatsoever.

Maybe his heart had been so hopelessly polluted that it needed more than one meeting with the sage for a thorough cleansing.

Some of the Western responses to Swamiji's addresses at the Parliament of Religions are given in the *Life* and *New Discoveries*, and also compiled in the *Commemorative Volume*.[27] One of these was from Harriet Monroe, who wrote in her book:

> But the handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant, magnetic; his voice, rich as a bronze bell; the controlled fervor of his feeling; the beauty of his message to the Western world he wa facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch.[28]

More about Harriet Monroe later.

The Parliament authorities came out with a souvenir pamphlet which included quotes and signatures from only 20 delegates and chief organizers out of hundreds that attended the congress. Swamiji was one of those selected, and above his signature it said—"It has shown that every religion can make a stand in the world of thought and has set people to thinking that the Lord is working everywhere."[29]

According to the *Life* Swamiji gave public speeches on at least three other occasions during the Parliament days. On the afternoon of September 22, in Hall VII of the Art Institute, he spoke at a special session organized by Mrs. Potter Palmer, the President of the Woman's Branch of the Auxiliary, on "Women in Oriental Religion." The text of his speech is not available, but one can visualize him talking about Maitreyi asking her husband Yajnavalkya when he gave her all his possession—"Sir, what will I do with all the wealth if it does not give me immortality?" Now, that question would have been difficult for most Chicagoans to understand! On September 23 he gave a talk before a session of the Universal Religious Unity Congress. This was another one of the several congresses held in conjunction with the Parliament in various halls of the Art Institute.[30] While the Parliament was in session, Swamiji spoke at least once outside its halls on Sunday, September 24 at the Third Unitarian Church at the southeast corner of Monroe and Laflin. The Church organization is still in existence in North Mayfield Avenue, but the original Church burned down on October 25, 1986 and was converted to a parking lot.

The lecture at the Third Unitarian Church must have been scheduled on a very short notice by Rev. James Vila Blake, the pastor of the Church. This was actually the first Sunday after Swamiji's major speech in the Parliament (on Hinduism) when the liberal clergymen could take the opportunity to present to their congregation the Oriental who had made an indelible impression on the Parliament audience. Rev. Blake was the first Chicago clergyman who opened the door for Swamiji to speak from his pulpit, with a number of such lectures from other Unitarian, Universalist, and Congregational Churches to follow, as we shall see later. The subject of his speech "The Love of God" has been reproduced in the *Complete Works* from the report taken from the *Chicago Herald.* This newspaper, probably the best one during the Parliament days to follow Swamiji's activities, wrote on September 25:

> The pastor, Rev. Mr. Blake, said that he was glad to invite Mr. Vivekananda into his pulpit and to introduce him, believing still in the faith of his fathers. Rev. Mr. Blake said he would turn his hand neither one way or the other to make such a man a Christian. He would do all he could to make such a man think for himself along the lines of the exalted spiritual conceptions which he had acquired.

Even the evenings were busy for Swamiji during the Parliament days. As a member of the foreign delegation to the Parliament he was invited to a reception at the palatial home of A. C. Bartlett on 2720 Prairie Avenue on September 11, along with a number of other delegates. Joining Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett in receiving the guests were, among others, Mrs. Potter Palmer, Rev. Barrows, and Bishop Keane. Adolphus Clay Bartlett, a businessman and philanthropist, was also a trustee of the Art Institute and the University of Chicago. He had assisted in raising money to bring to Chicago the penniless Oriental delegates (although Swamiji was not a direct beneficiary of that) and later organized the company which financed the publication of the history of the Parliament. Dr. John Barrows' book—*The World's Parliament of Religions*—was published as a result. Bartlett was brought up a Universalist, but Rev. Barrows drew him towards the Presbyterian Church. He was invaluable to Rev. Barrows, and to his family after the pastor's death.

Like most of the houses on Prairie Avenue, Mr. Bartlett's house was also demolished to make room for apartment complexes. Standing on this site, even amidst the cold and mundane environment of condominium and apartment complexes, one cannot help thinking about that historic September 11. This was the evening when Swamiji, while undoubtedly being congratulated by the attending Chicago dignitaries for his captivating speech earlier in the day, actually "wept from the depths of his heart over the poverty and suffering of the Indian masses."[31] All this glory was for him a constant reminder of his poor brothers in India.

Charles Bonney gave a gala reception at the Art Institute in the evening of September 12 for the delegates. The *Inter Ocean* of September 13 said:

> The ladies of Chicago acted gallantly in escorting the brethren from the far East. Mrs. Hyde took charge of Professor H. Dharmapala, Ceylon; Mrs. Wakerman did the needful for the handsome Vivikananda[*sic*]....The remainder of the evening was given to the presentation of the distinguished delegates, who made some of their happiest speeches....Vivi Kananda[*sic*] came next, and he had a happy reception and was very much at home.

He was one of the very few delegate guests mentioned in that coverage.

Mrs. Potter Palmer, darling of the Chicago high society and president of the Board of Lady Managers, also gave a reception for the delegates on the evening of September 14 at the Women's Building in Jackson Park. Mrs. Palmer delivered an outstanding address of welcome followed by a speech by Mr. Thomas Palmer, the president of the World's Columbian Exposition, who later hosted Swamiji in his house in Detroit in 1894. Mrs. Potter Palmer wanted some authoritative statements about the condition of women from other lands, so Swamiji spoke on "Condition of Women in India." On the afternoon of September 16, Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Blatchford gave a reception in their home on 375 La Salle Avenue. The present site would be at 609 S. La Salle Street, the southeast corner of La Salle and Harrison, where an office-store-complex building now stands. Eliphalet Wickes Blatchford was a manufacturing tycoon, a lawyer turned businessman who had supported many philanthropic activities in the city. The reception was for the delegates and other leading citizens of Chicago. There were numerous other prominent citizens and religious leaders of Chicago who had extended their American hospitality to the men of the Orient who, as a group, had made a lasting impression on the audience during the Parliament's early sessions.

The Art Institute, where the Parliament was held, was the only building that was allowed to be built between Michigan Avenue and the lake. Lake Michigan was much closer to Michigan Avenue at that time. The credit for this should go to A. Montgomery Ward, the mail-order millionaire, who was successful in keeping the city's front yard free of any other structure. Completed in early 1893, the Art Institute was built on the site of the decaying Interstate Industrial Exposition Hall, fondly called the "Crystal Palace." Designed by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge of Boston, whose earlier work had included designing Stanford University in Palo Alto, the Art Institute is reflective of the Italian Renaissance style of architecture. "The classically inspired forms of the 1893 building conveyed the idealism of the city's leadership more effectively than words."[32] The famous pair of bronze lions by Edward L. Kemeys were installed in May 1894, and "was adopted almost instantaneously by Chicagoans as a proud symbol of the city's prestigious art museum."[33] So Swamiji didn't see these at the time of the Parliament. The building was used to hold all the World's Congress Auxiliary meetings from May 1 through October 31. The Art Institute took possession on November 1, and formally opened it on December 8, 1893.

Many additions to the original Art Institute have been constructed over the years, and the interior has been considerably modified. The Hall of Columbus is no longer there. Fullerton Hall now occupies the place where the speaker's platform and a part of the gallery were located. The rest of the Hall of Columbus has been divided into studios and classrooms. The Ryerson Library has been constructed where the Hall of Washington was once located. In this Fullerton Hall, the 100th anniversary of Swamiji's speech was celebrated on September 11, 1993 under the auspices of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society and the Consulate of India. A plaque in honor of Swamiji was unveiled on September 11, 1995, 102 years after his memorable speech. Behind the wall where the plaque is located was the original Hall of Columbus. The plaque reads:

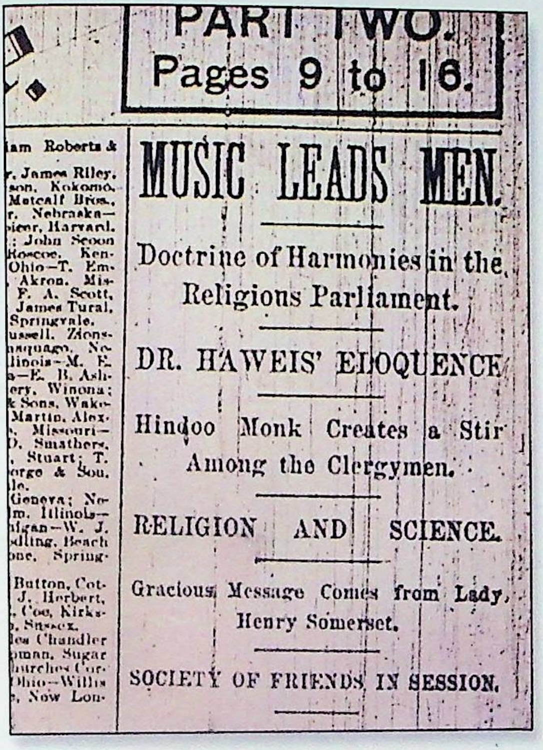
> On this site between September 11 and 27, 1893 Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the first Hindu monk from India to teach Vedanta in America, addressed the World's Parliament of Religions, held in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition. His unprecedented success opened the way for the dialogue between Eastern and Western religions.

On November 11, 1995 the then Ambassador S. S. Ray unveiled the road sign dedicating a part of Michigan Avenue, from Adams to Monroe, as "Swami Vivekananda Way" in Swamiji's memory. This is an "Honorary" designation, not to be used in postal address or in any official document. Swamiji had walked this part of Michigan Avenue numerous times.

After meeting with Rev. Barrows on September 10 Swamiji was "housed for a short while with the other Oriental delegates" before moving on to another home.[34] According to his letter of November 2 to Perumal he lodged with both "Oriental and Occidental delegates." One of the most descriptive accounts of Swamiji's life during the Parliament days, but away from the Art Institute, comes from the reminiscences of Cornelia Conger.[35] She was the granddaughter of John B. Lyon, in whose house Swamiji later moved to and stayed during a part of the Parliament days and probably a few days after that. It was Swami Shankarananda, president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in India, who persuaded a reluctant Miss Conger to publish her reminiscences of Swamiji in *Prabuddha Bharata*. The reason for her reluctance was that she had considered her memories "childish and trivial."

It is possible that of all the people, old and young, who came in close contact with Swamiji in Chicago, Cornelia Conger was the only one who put her recollections down in black and white for posterity. The six-year old girl sat on his lap, showed him her homework, and listened to his stories from a far-away land. She had absolutely no idea then that her "childish and trivial" memories would later be cherished by the followers of Swamiji everywhere. Not one person, not even any member of his American family, had done what she did. May God bless her soul; Swamiji must have already done that!

The Lyon home was on 262 Michigan Avenue. It was an "old-fashioned frame-house, painted olive green with boxes of red geraniums across the front." There Mr. Lyon lived with his wife, two sons John B. Jr. and William, a widowed daughter, and Cornelia, his six-year old grand daughter from the daughter's side. The Art Institute was about six hundred yards to the north, and across the street, from the Lyon home. Their



PART TWO.
Pages 9 to 16.

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MUSIC LEADS MEN.

Doctrine of Harmonies in the Religions Parliament.

DR. HAWEIS' ELOQUENCE

Hindoo Monk Creates a Stir Among the Clergymen.

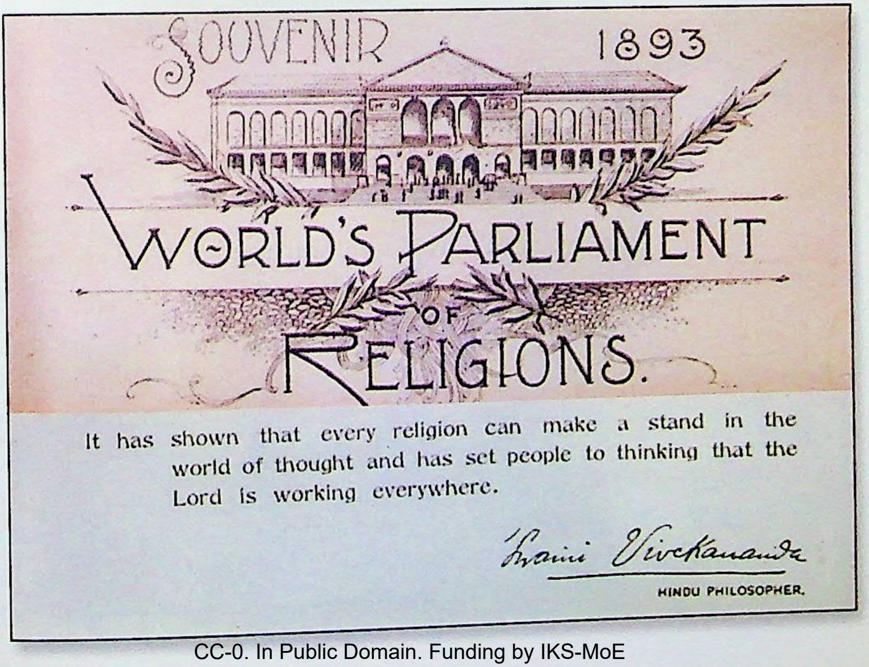
RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

Gracious Message Comes from Lady Henry Somerset.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS IN SESSION.

Swami Vivekananda cited on the first page of the report on the Parliament of Religions in *Chicago Tribune* of September 20, 1893.

Parliament of Religions souvenir *Courtesy: Meadville/Lombard Theological School Archives*

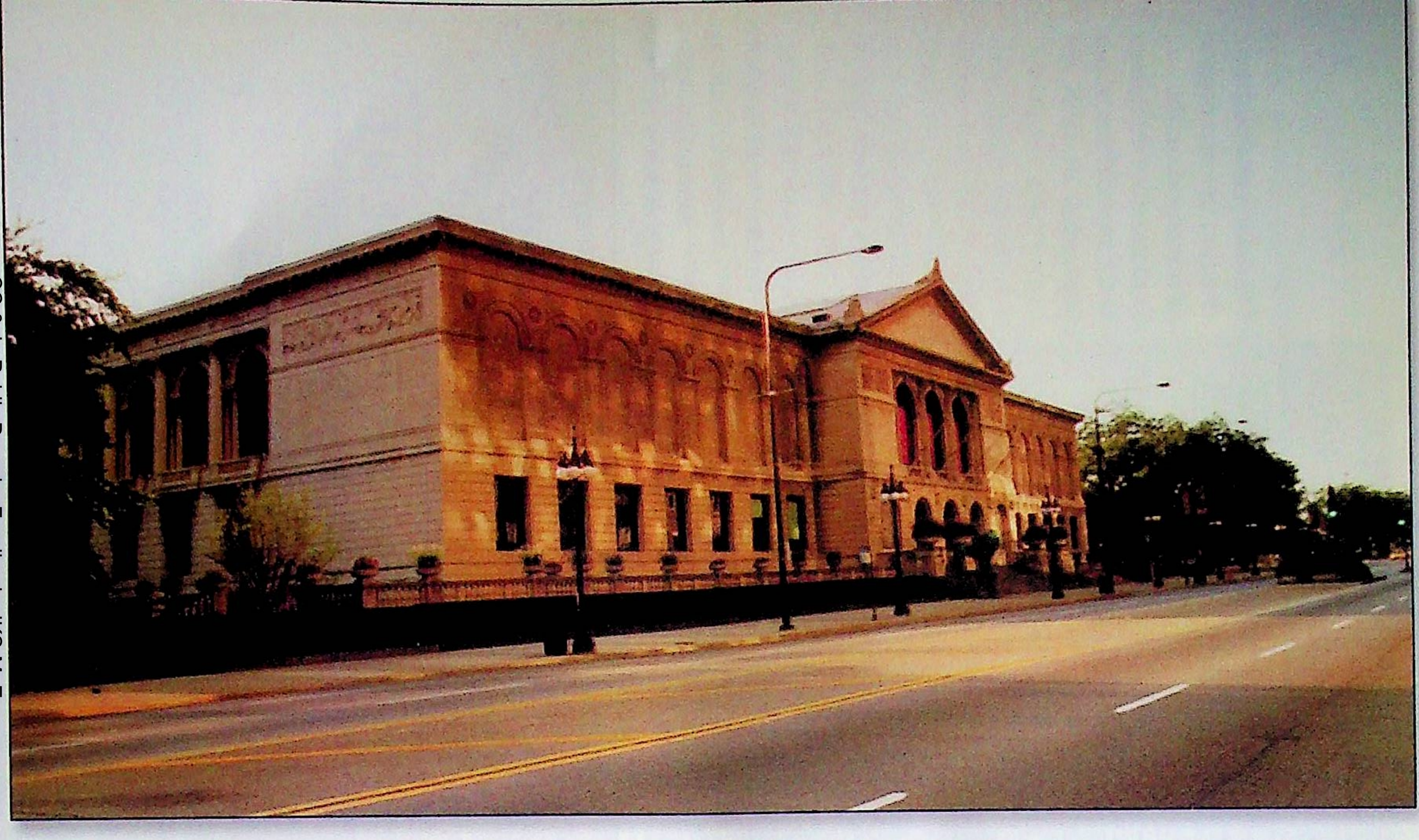


SOUVENIR 1893

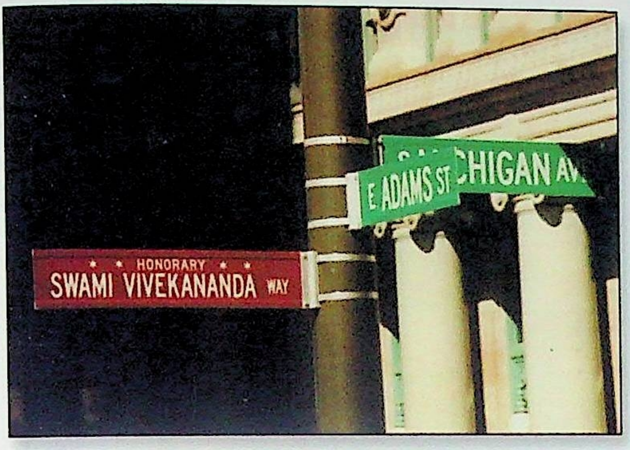
WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS.

It has shown that every religion can make a stand in the world of thought and has set people to thinking that the Lord is working everywhere.

Swami Vivekananda
HINDU PHILOSOPHER.



The Art Institute of Chicago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Swamiji Commemorative Plaque;
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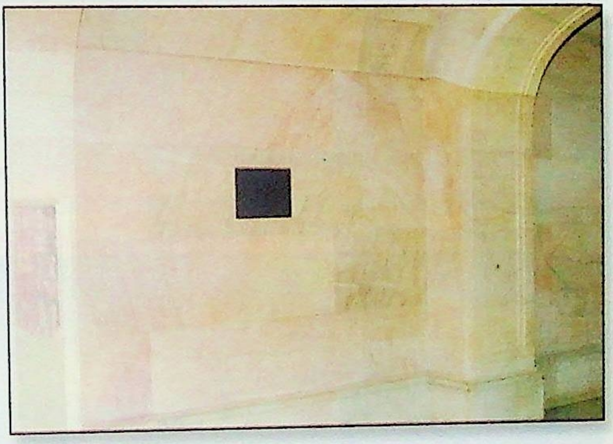

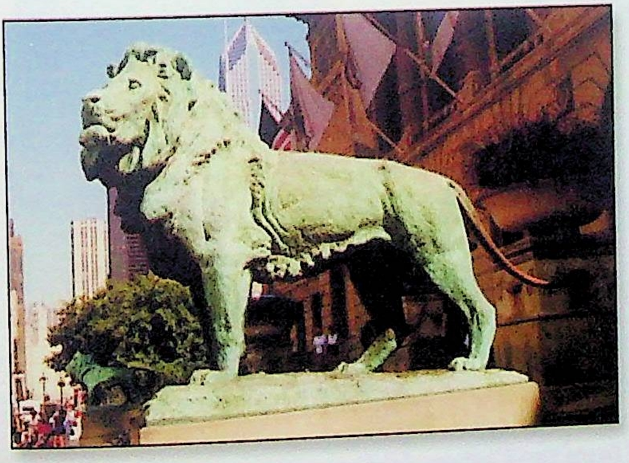

One of a pair
of the Art Institute's
famous lions

The Chicago Hilton and Towers Hotel, the site of John Lyon's home

Michigan Avenue;
looking north from the Chicago Hilton and Towers Hotel

house was demolished around 1925 when the massive 25-story Stevens Hotel was built on the site at the southwest corner of Balbo and Michigan. The three-thousand-room hotel was then the largest in the world, with an 18-hole rooftop golf course (probably a miniature one), and its own hospital.[36] As Hilton Towers, it is now a part of the Hilton chain of hotels.

According to Miss Conger's reminiscence, her grandmother, a member of the First Presbyterian Church, volunteered to host a "broad-minded" delegate. Mr. Lyon was "much interested in philosophy, but heartily disliked bigots." Rev. John Barrows was the pastor of their Church, located at the corner of Indiana Avenue and 21st Street. So, there was a connection between the Lyons and Rev. Barrows. It is not hard to see why Swamiji was selected in response to that specification, he definitely was in conformance with that more than most other delegates. Swamiji had a very comfortable stay with the Lyons, and Mr. Lyon and he became good friends. Whether it was at the dinner table, lavishly sprinkling "Mrs. Ilhennys Tabasco Sauce" on his food to satisfy his Bengali palate against the bland American food, or at the Chicago Club talking to a group of Mr. Lyon's friends, or in the drawing room of the Lyon home telling enchanting stories to a six-year old girl, or at the Symphony Concert on a Friday afternoon wondering why it didn't matter that the same western music, unlike the Indian *ragas,* was played any time during the day, Miss Conger has given an engaging account of Swamiji's activities outside the four walls of the Art Institute.

One day Swamiji said to Mrs. Lyon that he had the greatest temptation of his life in America. When Mrs. Lyon inquired about the identity of the woman, he burst out laughing and said it was not a lady, but "Organization." The western approach to organizing work deeply impressed him during this time, and he started thinking how he could adapt it to his own work in India. The World's Columbian Exposition and the accompanying World's Congress Auxiliary, right in front of his eyes, were probably the two most successful fruition of organized work in the 19th century. Mrs. Lyon also took him to visit the Women's Hospital of Chicago, at the northwest corner of 32nd Street and Rhodes Avenue, of which she was the president. The hospital does not exist anymore; a well-manicured lawn now occupies the site.

According to Cornelia Conger, Swamiji visited the Chicago Club with her grandfather. John Lyon was a prominent member of the community and a longtime member of this club. A few blocks north of their home, the Club, one of the most prestigious enclaves in Chicago, was housed in the old Art Institute building at the southwest corner of Michigan and Van Buren. The Club bought the building in 1893 when the new Art Institute was built across the street. The building collapsed in 1929 and was rebuilt along the architectural lines of its predecessor. The present Chicago Club address is 81 E. Van Buren Street.

The "Magnificent Mile" in Chicago refers to the stretch of road extending north from Michigan Avenue bridge up to Oak Street, lined on both sides by exclusive stores. Here can one buy a pair of running shoes in Niketown, or a dress at Gucci, or a pair of gloves at Bloomingdales. To do justice to its name, the "Magnificent Mile" should actually refer to the stretch of road extending from Hilton Towers to the Art Institute (even though it is less than a mile), the road Swamiji used to attend the Parliament of Religions.

A poem touching on the theme of Swamiji's lectures in the Parliament of Religions is given below:[38]

You left the land where Ganga flows,
In eighteen ninety-three;
West you came to the home of the brave,
And to the land of the free.

The family of George and Mary Hale,
Then took you as their own;
You could count on them as dearest friends;
And you were not alone.

The Art Institute of the Windy City
Was where you gave your speech;
You told them of your eastern faith,
And touched the heart of each.

You told them how the rivers flow,
And finally come to the sea;
Each river follows its unique path,
To a similar destiny.

People of different religious faiths,
Likewise—you did say,
Try to reach the One Almighty;
Each in its unique way.

Fanatic bigots and hateful sects
Through the course of history
Drenched the earth with human blood,
In crazy and violent spree.

But the time had come you said to them
To rise above hate and fear;
To end all kinds of persecution
Caused by the pen or spear.

You told the people of tolerance and love,
But now it's a grievous shame;
In spite of all your lifelong work,
The world's still in need of change.

Was the Parliament a success? According to the objectives laid out in the beginning, it was. Although Objective 3 specifically mentioned the Parliament "not striving to achieve any formal or outward unity," the Brotherhood of Christian Unity was seeking to unite men of all creeds on the single platform of allegiance to Jesus Christ. They were vigorously recruiting people and holding prayer meetings.[39] That effort was not successful, obviously to the disappointment of some. These prayers were offered for the heathen group in the

Congress, so that they would see their errors and accept the truth of Christianity. This is probably what Swamiji was referring to in his concluding speech, the speech that did not sit well with Rev. Barrows and some members of the audience. There was possibly a hidden agenda behind the Parliament as expressed by Swamiji—"The Parliament of Religions was organised with the intention of proving the superiority of the Christian religion over other forms of faith, but the philosophic religion of Hinduism was able to maintain its position notwithstanding."[40] Trumbull expressed a similar view when he said—"If the intention of the congress was to show to heathens, Jews, and pagans, the superiority of Christianity to their benighted faiths, its purpose failed."[41] In short, the man who had formerly believed in Christianity, or Buddhism, or Hinduism, or any other religion for that matter, still continued believing in it.

Two of the strongest criticisms of the Parliament appeared, not surprisingly, in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* and the *Missionary Review of the World.* In its editorial in April 1894 the former said:

> The reading of the remarks on the Parliament in Asiatic journals, both secular and religious, is calculated to produce shame and disgust in everyone who has had any pride in the intelligence of Americans. Christianity, enlightenment, and morality have been dragged in the mire before deified lust, sanctified cruelty, and conceited superstition. The history of the world has seldom seen such a prostration of holy rights before debased deception and cruel wrong as in the Parliament of Religions.

Arthur T. Pierson, the editor-in-chief of the latter, said in December 1894:

> Parliament was a mistake…in its inadequate presentation and representation of Christianity…it was a mistake, in the false impressions left on hundreds who attended it…a

> mistake, in establishing a bad precedent,...it was a mistake in exalting some parties into a undue, undeserved prominence, and in actually helping to propagate false faiths [that the salvation is not in Christ alone].

There were still some conservative Christian ministers who thought the Parliament had established the superiority of Christianity, and hence it was successful from their point of view. One of them, Rev. George Dana Boardman, mentioned earlier with reference to his farewell speech in the Parliament on unification, said in the January 10, 1895 issue of *The Independent:*

> We often hear it said that Christianity is the only true religion, and therefore it is exclusive of all other religions. I venture to think that it is the other religions which are really exclusive; that it is the Christian religion which is really inclusive, and, therefore, that the Christian religion is the only true, adequate religion for mankind. This is one of the great truths which the Parliament of Religions brought into clearer light.

Even after almost a year and a half Rev. Boardman just didn't get it! In contrast, a Jewish intellectual who had attended the Parliament said later to Swami Nikhilananda, head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York: "After hearing Swami Vivekananda I realized that my religion was also true."[42]

Christians saw the Parliament as an opportunity to develop strategy for converting the heathens. Summarizing the practical results of the Parliament *The Outlook* said:

> The Christian world rejoices to-day with Dr. Barrows in the successful consummation of his great plan.... The desire for the conversion of nations represented by such attractive personalities as those of the men who have come from five to fifteen thousand miles to speak here has grown enormously....In the words of the great Bishop of Massachusetts who looked forward to this gathering with

> hopes which few so joyously held, "Who would go across the street to take away the religion of a Buddhist or a Parsee?—who would not compass the earth to make him a Christian?" Thus the Parliament sat as both pupil and teacher in order that Christians might become more fully the latter.[43]

The Outlook finally admitted that the permanent influence of the Parliament will be a blessing without the slightest question, even though it could have exalted many men into undue prominence.[44] The magazine was no doubt referring to the Oriental delegates, especially Swamiji.

Even the *Interior* magazine, which later criticised Swamiji and the Parliament, in its editorial on September 28 said:

> The religious parliament is one of the best modern object lessons on toleration the world has yet seen. Sectarian exclusiveness and untimely bigotry have received a rebuke that cannot successfully be withstood....The Hindu monk has clasped hands with the Christian evangelist, and the disciples of the Nazarene exchanged friendly greetings with the follower of the Arabian prophet, the Catholic and the Protestant have for the time fraternized. The very appearance of the platform in Columbus Hall was a significant and inspiring spectacle.

A year later, Max Muller summarized his assessment in *The Arena* of December 1894 in an article titled *The Real Significance of the Parliament of Religions*:

> ...if I am not greatly mistaken, [the Parliament] will be remembered, aye, will bear fruit, when everything else of the mighty Columbian Exposition has long been swept away from the memory of man...there is one fact in connection with the Parliament of Religions which no skeptic can belittle...Such a gathering of representatives of the principal religions of the world has never before taken place; it is unique, it is unprecedented; nay, we may

truly add, it could hardly have been conceived before our own time.

From the point of view of the Asians, especially the Buddhist and Hindu delegates, it was a grand success. They had said enough to show that they were the masters of subtleties of thought. After only three days of the Parliament the *Chicago Evening Journal* said in its September 14 editorial:

> The more one reflects upon it the more one is convinced of the falseness of our position hitherto. How hopeless to send out to convert such men. Are they not fit preachers of their own domain? Is our idea of God more exalted than theirs? By what right do we pretend to instruct them? These are grave but practical questions that must force themselves upon the Christian church and upon all the people of the West. Contempt and pity have given way to respect and admiration.

Of the Oriental delegates, the Streator *Free Press* said on October 4:

> One of the surprises of the Parliament was the prominent place at once assumed by the Orientals. As scholars, philosophers and orators, they occupied positions of the highest eminence and absorbed the greatest interest, so that the managers were constrained to put them last on the programme in order to hold the audience.

This was definitely true in Swamiji's case.

A just and sincere tribute was paid to the Oriental delegates, including Swamiji, by none other than the General Secretary of the Parliament Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones. During his Sunday service following the Parliament the Reverend said, as quoted by the Chicago Herald on October 2:

> Christianity was thrown on the defensive on the floors of that parliament. Obviously the Pagans, to borrow a world's fair figure, made the best exhibit. They were most

> in demand. They enkindled the greatest enthusiasm, and this is not wholly explained by the fact of novelty. There was something other than the white robes that drew the hearts of that multitude toward Dharmapala. Seventeen days would have exhausted the novelty of the saffron robe of the Brahmin monk Vive-Kananda, had there not been back of it a mind skilled in thought, and if that thought had not probed through things temporal and transient to things universal and eternal. The Japanese won the American hearts in spite of their gait, their foreign tongue and Pagan antecedents. These representatives of the Orient triumphed over that audience by telling them unexpected truths. All these men won our hearts because they left much of their baggage at home. The ecclesiasticism, the forms and the dogmas of these religions were not worth paying freight on. These men came as prophets and not as priests. They came to show us that we had no monopoly upon the superlative things of the soul, and Christianity was only on the defensive in so far as it tried to guard its peculiar, its special, its exclusive prerogatives.

More about Rev. Jones later.

The thunderous applause received by the Eastern delegates during and after their speeches, Swamiji's included, aroused jealousy among some of the Christian delegates. In the December 27, 1894 issue of *The Independent*, the incorrigible Rev. Boardman struck again:

> Let me, in passing, say a word about the meaning of the applause, for it has been greatly misunderstood, and, therefore, unintentionally misrepresented. The applause was often tumultuous, but it was not the applause of the indorsement for the What; it was the applause of admiration for the How; not the approval of the sentiment, but the enjoyment of the oratory. I ought to add that of all the instances of applause none was so rapturous as those which punctuated the most pronounced evangelical

sentiments touching sin, and the salvation which is through Jesus Christ only. The very applause proved that it was a Christian Parliament.

Christian Parliament—indeed!

Ironically, it was one of Rev. Boardman's Christian colleagues, Rev. Thomas Ernest Allen, a Unitarian minister from Massachusetts, who had warned people to be aware of Christians like Rev. Boardman. In the July 1893 issue of *The Arena* he wrote about the upcoming Parliament of Religions:

> Is there any hope for agreement between the representatives of the many faiths who will assemble at Chicago, anyone of whom may burn with a zeal not one whit less sincere and consuming than that which will probably be manifested by some of the Christians? Good will result if there is nothing more than a frank statement of the teachings and claims of each religion. The reverent and dignified bearing and evident sincerity of the devotees of oriental faiths cannot but prove a wholesome object lesson to those Christians who, having practically forgotten that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men,' can see no possibility of a revelation of truth outside of the Hebrew Scriptures....Let us now pass beyond the bounds of Christianity, to which our discussion has been confined. *As all rivers and streams lead at last to the one great ocean* [italics by the author], so reason, which has the power to lift Christians above denominational fences, can raise Buddhist, Mohammedan, Parsee, Jew, and Christian into the higher atmosphere of universal truth.

If one didn't know Swamiji was aboard the *Empress of India* somewhere between Yokohama and Vancouver when the above article was published, or that he was probably in India when the article was written, and that he didn't have a prepared speech, one would suspect Rev. Allen had borrowed Swamiji's lecture script.

For Swamiji—it was a phenomenal success. The Parliament had provided a forum for the penniless monk, without even the support of his own country, with hardly any sponsor, and with nothing except a strong determination and a mandate from his master, to spring into meteoric prominence. Was it "undue and undeserved"? According to many others, including Malachi Martin, it was not. Referring to Swamiji's "comet-like ascendancy into fame" after the Parliament Martin said:

> ...it was not so much what the Swami said; it was the way he made it fit so remarkably well with the journey of science and humanism toward a new idea of material perfection....For he supplied the notion that what mattered was not religion in general or any religion in particular, but spirit. To be spiritual; that was the key... the Swami supplied a vocabulary to express that spirituality....Its appeal was that it harped on the dignity of man, the privileged power of his reason; and it placed total trust only on human nature, so that if each person were free of all tinkering and tampering by organized religion, he could achieve his own happiness....[45]

Martin credited Swamiji with supplying to the intellectuals of America a mind-set that the Christian leaders had failed to do.

Along a somewhat similar line Merwin Marie-Snell wrote—"America is starving for spiritual nourishment. In spite of the ignorance and provincialism of its upper classes, and the savagery of its lower, there are many souls everywhere through its great population who are thirsting for higher things—a thirst which Hinduism and Vivekananda are going to assuage."[46]

Referring to the representatives of "various exotic faiths" David Burg acknowledged that "the most prominent and popular of these representatives was Swami Vivekananda."[47] But Swamiji was much more than that. Documenting the notable utterances by the foremost representatives of the various faiths in the Parliament the book *Ray of Lights from All Lands* said about Swamiji:

> No character in the Parliament attracted more attention and interest than Swami Vivekananda, of Bombay, India, whom Bishop Keane called "the great Hindu monk." By birth a Brahman of high rank, educated at the university of Calcutta, a scholar in Sanskrit lore of the highest rank, but vowed to monastic poverty, as Buddha was, his yellow robe was not more striking than the glow of intellect and the light of rare character in his fine face. The modesty, courtesy, and gentleness with which he offered his testimony of Vedic Brahmanism, and his strictures upon wrong done to Hindus by unworthy Christians, were of the most telling effect.[48]

Swamiji evaluated his own performance in a nutshell as he wrote to Prof. Wright on October 2—"If I have done well, He gave me the strength for it; if I have miserably failed—I knew that beforehand—for I am hopelessly ignorant."

Swamiji's success in the Parliament and his comments regarding the Christian missionaries in India prompted Mrs. Caroline Haskell of Chicago to persuade Rev. John H. Barrows to deliver lectures on Christianity in Calcutta and other parts of India, so that people there would have the "strongest possible presentations of Christian truth from recognized Christian leaders."[49] Mrs. Haskell donated $20,000 to the University of Chicago towards this initiative, and Rev. Barrows considered it important enough to resign the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago and go to India. "There is something curious and interesting in the fact that Chicago, in order to tell India what Christianity is, must not only lose one of its most prominent pastors, must very possibly also close one of its hitherto prominent and prosperous churches"—*The Outlook* writes.[50] The Christian leaders couldn't rely on Mr. Pratap C. Mozoomdar to do the job, they had to engage one of their best talents to do it.

The fact of the matter is that as the chairman of the Parliament Rev. John Barrows had his own hidden missionary agenda. In the summer of 1892, more than a year before the Parliament, Rev. Barrows addressed a crowd in New York where he had clearly stated his inner motives. There he said:

> Christianity claims to be the true religion, fitted to all and demanding the submission of all.…let me record here the conviction that the divine way of building up the kingdom of Christ in America is to engage with fresh ardor in efforts to Christianise India and Africa, Turkey and China.…Let no one fear that the solar orb of Christianity is to be eclipsed by the lanterns and rush-lights of other faiths.[51]

In the context of the Parliament's objectives this statement would have been termed seditious! No wonder Rev. Barrows did not approve of Swamiji's closing comments!

Whatever Swamiji's true feelings were towards Rev. Barrows, he was ever grateful to him for giving India a free voice in the Parliament and wrote a nice note to the *Indian Mirror* introducing Rev. Barrows to its readers. Rev. Barrows' mission to India, however, did not meet with any semblance of success as Swamiji's letter to Mary Hale points out.[52] During the Parliament Rev. Barrows was bound by the diplomatic limitations of his position as the host and chairman, but he could not hide his true color indefinitely and it finally showed. Swamiji further added—"Poor Man! He came here to preach the most bigoted Christianity.…I hear that he was mad at the national rejoicing over my coming home…the Parliament of Religions has been made a farce of in the Hindu mind by Dr. Barrows."

About the historicity of the Parliament itself Jackson says—"Looking back a century later we can now see that the Parliament of Religions itself was not the watershed event that contemporary enthusiasts proclaimed, nor did it launch a new era in world religious history."[53] But for Swamiji it was an event that inaugurated the flow of spirituality, however thin the stream was, from the East to the West. Jackson has also said—"...he [Swamiji] clearly deserves credit as the founder of American Hinduism and pioneer Asian teacher who paved the way for all Eastern teachers who have followed."[54] Little over a hundred years later, there are at least twenty-six official Vedanta Centers and Retreats in North America and nine more in three other continents, excluding those in the Indian subcontinent.[55] The number of unofficial ones organized by the local devotees outside of the Indian subcontinent add up to another thiry-two.[56] By the time this book is published there may be additional ones organized. Even the Ramakrishna movement in India owes its initiation, and later its expansion, to Swamiji's success at the Parliament. That was where it all started.

So Swamiji's remark to Swami Turiyananda prior to his trip to the U.S. that the Parliament was being organized for him was essentially verified. Sri Ramakrishna's prophecy came true—his Naren did teach—and in what wonderful way!

CHAPTER 7

POST PARLIAMENT DAYS OF 1893

About a year after the Parliament the *Inter Ocean* reported:

> Vivekananda lingered in Chicago for several months after the great Parliament of Religions closed, studying many questions relating to schools and the material advancement of civilization in order to carry back to his own people as convincing arguments regarding America as he brought to this country concerning the morality and spirituality of his own people.[1]

Swamiji spent this time, between lectures and travel to communities in and around Chicago and the Midwest, visiting museums, art galleries, schools, universities, hospitals, technical institutions, etc., to understand the underlying forces that made America what it was. He could not have come to a better place. Chicago, at that time, was the newest and the most incredibly explosive metropolis in the country, and probably in the world.

The Parliament of Religions came to a close on September 27. Immediately following the Parliament, Swamiji was invited to the house of Mr. Elisha Gray, the noted inventor of electrical equipment.[2] Then it must have been on September 28 or 29 that he went to Highland Park, a wealthy suburb on Lake Michigan, about 25 miles north of Chicago. The guests at the vegetarian dinner, given in Swamiji's honor, were some very illustrious scientists and engineers. The British physicist

Sir William Thomson, or Lord Kelvin; the German scientist, Professor Herman von Helmholtz; the French delegate to the International Electrical Congress, Professor Edourd Hospitalier; were all there along with other distinguished people.[3] These engineers and scientists were in Chicago to visit the World's Fair and to attend the various congresses held in conjunction with it. Although one does not find the name of Nicola Tesla mentioned in the guest list, he was probably there too. Nicola Tesla was the inventor of the alternating current generating machine which was being demonstrated at the World's Fair. Swamiji met him later in New York, but he could have met him in Chicago first. Charles P. Steinmetz of General Electric Co., an outstanding electrical engineer, was also in Chicago at that time and could have attended the dinner party. Swamiji, who had electrified the Parliament audience with his speeches, was in good company. One wonders what he and Sir Thomson were discussing amongst themselves. One was the seeker of absolute truth, and the other of absolute zero. Sir Thomson was the physicist who had introduced to the world the absolute scale of temperature (degree Kelvin).

When and where Elisha Gray came to know Swamiji well enough to throw a party in his honor is not known, but he was quite a personality. Born in Ohio on August 2, 1835 he graduated from Oberlin College in 1863. He moved to Highland Park in 1871. The firm of Gray and Barton, which had been organized in Cleveland in 1867 also moved to Chicago, and in 1872 became the Western Electric Company. Mr. Gray filed over one hundred patents beginning in October, 1867, and ending with his death in 1901. On February 14, 1876, he filed a caveat with the Patent Office for a device to transmit vocal sounds by wire. Alexander Graham Bell filed a patent application on the same day and a long legal battle followed. It continued until 1893 when the Supreme Court ruled for Bell. Elisha Gray's teleautograph machine to transmit facsimile was one of the exhibits in the Electrical building at the Columbian Exposition. His home on Hazel

Avenue was built in 1871-72, and the house number then was 359*.[4]

Immediately following the Parliament a week-long World's Congress of Missions was held at the Art Institute where Rev. W. M. Barrows, brother of Rev. J. H. Barrows, presided. The theme in essence was—"how to Christianize the world and save the heathens!" Swamiji was naturally not invited, but his name surely came up frequently when the Christian leadership huddled to come up with a strategy.

The next scheduled lecture by Swamiji was in the Evanston First Congregational Church. Evanston is a town about twenty miles north of the Art Institute on Lake Michigan, and the home of the Northwestern University. With a population of approximately 15,000, it had been changed from a village to a city in 1892.

According to the *Chicago Evening Journal* of September 29 Swamiji gave three lectures in Evanston, on September 30 and October 3 at the church, and on October 5 in a private home. The present church at Lake and Hinman is the third generation Congregational church. The first church built in 1870 was destroyed in a fire in 1884. The second church, built in 1886 that lasted until 1926, was the one where Swamiji gave his first two lectures. He was invited to Evanston by the then pastor of the First Congregational Church Rev. Jean Frederick Loba. The subjects were "Hindu Altruism" (September 30), "Monism" (October 3), and "Reincarnation" (October 5). The account of these lectures in the Evanston newspapers can be found in the *New Discoveries*. The Congregational church where he spoke was at the same site where the present church stands, at the southeast corner of Hinman and Grove (1445 N. Hinman). Although he had already spoken once in a Unitarian Church, this three-day affair was a major engagement in the Greater Chicago religious circle for Swamiji. The guest lecture program at the Church included, among others, Dr. Carl von

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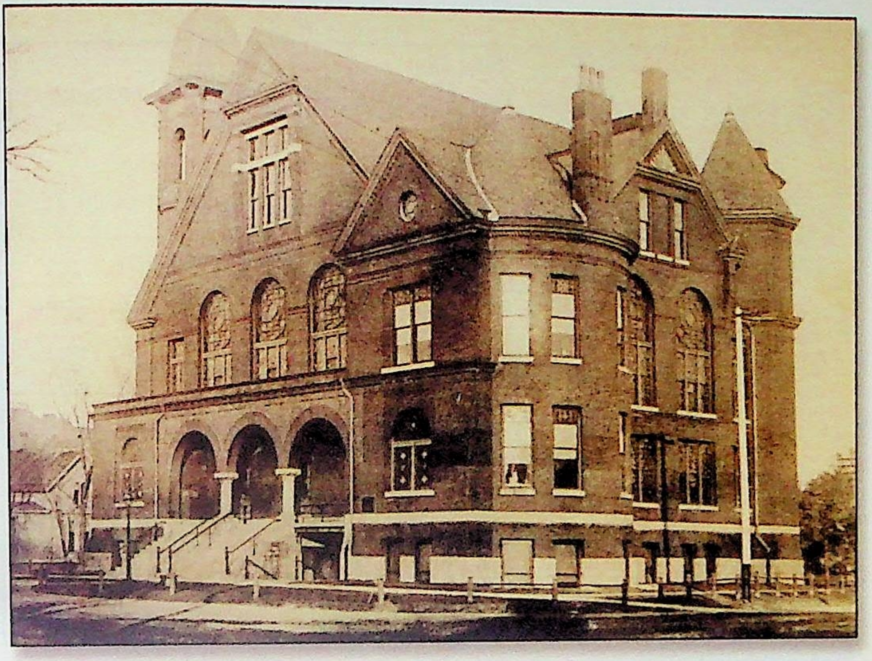
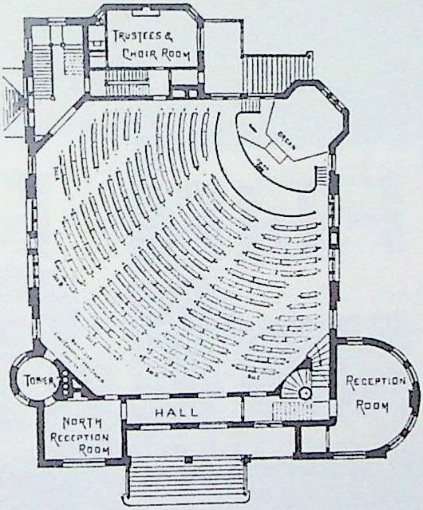
* In 1950 the number changed to 461.



Evanston First Congregational Church, *ca.* 1893
Courtesy: The First Congregational Church Archives


TRUSTEES & CHOIR ROOM
ORGAN
TOWER
HALL
NORTH RECEPTION ROOM
RECEPTION ROOM

Evanston First Congregational Church Hall floor plan, *ca.* 1893
Courtesy: The First Congregational Church Archives

The present Evanston First Congregational Church

Elisha Gray's home in Highland Park

Bergen, a Unitarian from Stockholm, Sweden. He and Swamiji became good friends.

It is probably not common knowledge that of all the towns around Chicago, Evanston has a disproportionately large share of Swamiji's footprints. That is due to his three lectures there and the three houses he visited, in one or more of which he may have stayed overnight. These houses are still standing in Evanston, reasonably untouched by the passage of time, proudly preserving his memories unbeknownst to its present occupants. Two of them have been addressed in the following paragraphs, and one in a subsequent chapter.

The *Press*, an Evanston weekly, reported on October 7:

> Mrs. Elizabeth Boynton Harbert entertained the lecturers at her residence Thursday evening, and here the third lectures were delivered. Dr. von Bergen spoke further upon the "Life of Catherine of Siena." Suami[*sic*] Vivekananda explained his beliefs in regard to "Reincarnation." He pointed out the popular error which exists concerning the passing of humanity into animal forms. He said it was a mistaken idea to think that his people were so careful of animals because they thought some former human being was now living in the form of the animal. On the contrary, it is simply a part of their religion to be kind to animals. Reincarnation is either progression, which is advancement to a higher type of manhood, or retrogression, which is the relapse of humanity to a lower plane of living.

Elizabeth Boynton Harbert was the wife of Mr. William S. Harbert, a lawyer from Evanston. She was chairman of one of the committees under the Columbian Association of Housekeepers and Bureau of Information. On September 23 she had spoken, along with Swamiji, before the Universal Religious Unity Congress at the Art Institute. Mrs. Harbert was a much accomplished woman activist. As a young girl in Indiana she tried, though unsuccessfully, to have women students admitted to Wabash College. As a young married woman in Iowa she became the president of the state association to promote the Suffrage movement, the movement to allow women to vote in federal elections. Later in Evanston she served as the president of the Illinois Woman's Suffrage Association. She was the editor of the "Woman's Kingdom," a weekly journal in the *Chicago Inter Ocean* newspaper. In 1889 she founded the Woman's Club of Evanston and was its president for seven years extending women's cultural opportunities.[5]

In 1899 Sister Nivedita had written to Miss Josephine MacLeod—"Miss Locke took me to see the Hasberts* on Saturday and they told how Swami came to see them, announcing himself on the doorstep as 'the gentleman from Georgia.'" It must have been the Harberts of Evanston Sister Nivedita was referring to*. Swamiji was trying to mimic the announcement usually made by the butlers or servants in well-to-do people's homes.[6]

It is not known exactly when Swamiji uttered those words at Harberts' doorstep. In all probability it was not during his first visit with them. The Harberts must have maintained contact with Swamiji, or his associates in Chicago. Because in 1899, during his second visit to the West, they had come to see him at the Hale apartment.

The Evanston Directory of 1893 lists the Harberts living at 1412 Judson, a beautiful residential street close to Lake Michigan, with their two children. A number of houses on the street are still existing from that era, along with the Harbert house which is now an Evanston landmark. In addition to delivering his third lecture in this house, there is a strong possibility that Swamiji stayed here overnight as well.

Another person from Evanston whom Swamiji had referred to in his letter of October 2 to Prof. John H. Wright was Prof. Bradley. He wrote—"Your friend Prof. Bradley was very kind to me and he always cheered me on [during the Parliament speeches]...I am going to Evanston tomorrow and hope to see Prof. Bradley there." Professor Bradley, a Doctor of Divinity, was the professor of New Testament Exegesis at the Garrett Biblical Institute of Northwestern University. To see Prof. Bradley at Evanston Swamiji had to go to their house at 1745 Hinman Avenue (now North Hinman) where Prof. Charles Frederick Bradley lived with his wife Susan. Their house was a short walk from the Congregational church Swamiji was invited to. Their large house on the southeast corner of Hinman and Clark still exists, identified as another Evanston landmark. Its unique Tudor style architecture sets it clearly apart from the other houses around it.

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* While transcribing Swamiji or Sister Nivedita's handwriting one had to make a guess at the Christian surnames they had mentioned. In various literature the Harberts have been referred to as "Hasberts, "Hurherts", "Barberts," etc.

A graduate of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, Charles Bradley was a Professor of Greek language and literature at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota before joining the Garrett faculty. One of his colleagues, Prof. Hayes, wrote in 1932, the year Prof. Bradley died —"Professor Bradley was our 'parfait gentil knyghte,' the soul of courtesy, the pattern of chivalry. His perfectly furnished home was a social center, noted for its hospitality."[7] Swamiji always had a soft corner for this "perfect gentleman." After the Green Acre Conference in the summer of 1894, Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Hale from Annisquam, Massachusetts—"Prof. Bradley of Evanston has gone home. If you ever meet him at Evanston, give him my best love and regards. He is really a spiritual man."[8]

The last known letter of Swamiji before the Parliament was written on September 4 from Salem, and the first known letter after the Parliament was written on October 2—both to Prof. John H. Wright. He felt an extreme sense of gratitude towards this gentleman who had helped him in many ways. It was not surprising that Swamiji didn't get time to write in between, especially during the Parliament days. Those days were filled with activities—listening to and giving speeches—and attending social functions. The first chance he got to sit down to write a letter, he wrote to Prof. Wright. It took him another month before he could write about his own experience at the Parliament to his admirers in India, which he did in a letter to Alasinga Perumal on November 2.

His long letter of October 2 to Prof. Wright brings up some interesting points. Although the letter was dated October 2, when Swamiji had finished the first part and signed off, he probably didn't mail it until later, adding pages to the letter as time went by. In the last part Swamiji writes—"Dear Adhyapakji, I am moving about just now—only when I come to Chicago—I always go to see Mr. and Mrs. Lyons [Lyon] one of the noblest couples I have seen here. If you would be kind enough to write to me kindly address it to the care of Mr. John B. Lyon 262, Michigan Ave Chicago." Swamiji could have referred to his trips to Highland Park and Evanston as "moving about" outside of Chicago. But the next long trip he took, before he came back to Chicago and probably saw the Lyons, was to Streator, as we shall see later. It is possible that Swamiji finished the last part of the letter after he came back from Streator on October 9.

His next known letter to Mrs. Kate Tannatt Woods on October 10 mentions his return from Streator on October 9. The return address was probably on the envelop, as it was not mentioned in the letter. Mrs. Woods did write to Swamiji after that, to which he again replied on November 19 giving the Hale residence as his address. This indicates that Swamiji, wherever he was staying, moved to 541 Dearborn Avenue by November 19. He did not mention this address to Alasinga Perumal in his letter of November 2. He was probably still using Thomas Cook Co. as his mailbox for the letters from India. It was not until his letter to Haripada Mitra on December 28 that he had started using 541 Dearborn Avenue as return address for his correspondents in India.

So where was Swamiji staying after the Parliament? In all probability he didn't move to the Hale house until early November, because even in his October 26 letter to Prof. Wright he used the J. B. Lyon address. He could have stayed with the

Lyons, as well as other hosts during this time. He actually alluded to this in his letter to Alasinga Perumal on November 2—"Many of the handsomest houses in this city are open to me. All the time I am living as a guest of somebody or other."[9]

The full account of Swamiji's Streator appearance has been uncovered only recently, 104 years after his visit.[10] He gave two lectures in the Plumb Opera House in Streator and stirred up a unique controversy between two newspaper editors that continued long after he left town. Swamiji came to this town of 10,000 residents, which was in all respect a Midwestern showcase, only two hours from Chicago by express train. Its businessmen were aggressive, progressive, and liberal. The religious life in Streator was remarkable for its breadth and variety. From Roman Catholic to Christian Science, all twenty odd churches found the town equally hospitable and welcome. It was probably his reputation in the context of the Parliament of Religions that encouraged the Opera House management to invite him to speak there.

As in Chicago, here also Swamiji was entertained by the elite of the society. Colonel Ralph Plumb, his host for his two nights' stay in Streator, was the town's foremost dignitary. He was well-known for his liberal viewpoints, both social and religious, and for his penchant for public welfare. As the first mayor of Streator, as the area Congressman, and as a benefactor for every major project in town, Colonel Plumb had written his name more deeply on the map of Streator than anybody else, past or present. He was compared with the likes of Lincoln and Grant, and was an inspiration to none other than Andrew Carnegie.

The Plumb home was on the southwest corner of Broadway and Wasson Streets, less than a five-minute walk westward from the Santa Fe railroad depot where Swamiji got off the train on October 7 accompanied by Col. Plumb's nephew. The Plumb home was demolished in 1958 and, appropriately, a house of God, the St. Paul's Lutheran Church, was built on the land blessed by Swamiji's two nights' stay.

Swamiji delivered his lectures in the Plumb Opera House at the southwest corner of Main and Vermilion Streets. His first lecture on October 7 was on the religion and customs of India. The lecture was short, and the audience small. Although Swamiji demonstrated occasional flash of eloquence during this speech, it was his second lecture on October 8, delivered from the pulpit of the Church of Good Will at the Opera House to a capacity audience, when he made the greatest impact. The subject, "God, a Universal Ruler," provided him the opportunity to dominate the audience with the force of his personality and the utter purity of his message. The editor of the Streator *Daily Monitor* wrote the following report:

> ### HEARD THE HEATHEN
>
> Swami Vive Kenanda[*sic*] Delivers Two Interesting Talks to Streator Audiences
>
> Cull from the dictionary a hundred superlative adjectives descriptive of the highest, most cultivated and active intellectuality, then go and hear Kenanda. Before he has talked ten minutes you will toss your collection of choice adjectives in the waste basket and acknowledge your inability to describe this wonderful man.
>
> The "Super Hindoo" came to Streator and on Saturday night lectured to a small audience at the Opera House. His talk was descriptive of the life and customs of his people, contrasted with the religion and customs of western nations. There were frequent flashes of eloquence that presaged the fine address which he was to make the following night. Last night Vive Kenanda occupied the pulpit of the Church of Good Will. He delivered a wonderful address, permeated with his own intense personality. The house was crowded and he commanded the breathless attention of every hearer. Cold type can not reproduce his meteoric flashes of superb eloquence.

> In substance his talk was a wonderful, eloquent and masterful argument in favor of a God—a Universal Ruler—from a purely intellectual and ethical standpoint. And there it stopped. But it was self evident that the Hindoo has an abiding and intense faith in the God of his conception and a great depth of human sympathy for his fellowman. It was well worth hearing, not alone for what was said, but as well for the waves of thought that his earnest words must have started in each intelligent mind before him.

Of all the known newspaper reviews Swamiji received in his early Chicago days, or at any other time for that matter, this is surely one of the best independent corroboration of his spiritual and rhetorical wherewithal. Yet while devotees and researchers have been combing through the Chicago newspapers for information about Swamiji's speeches in the Parliament, this report has remained hidden for 104 years.

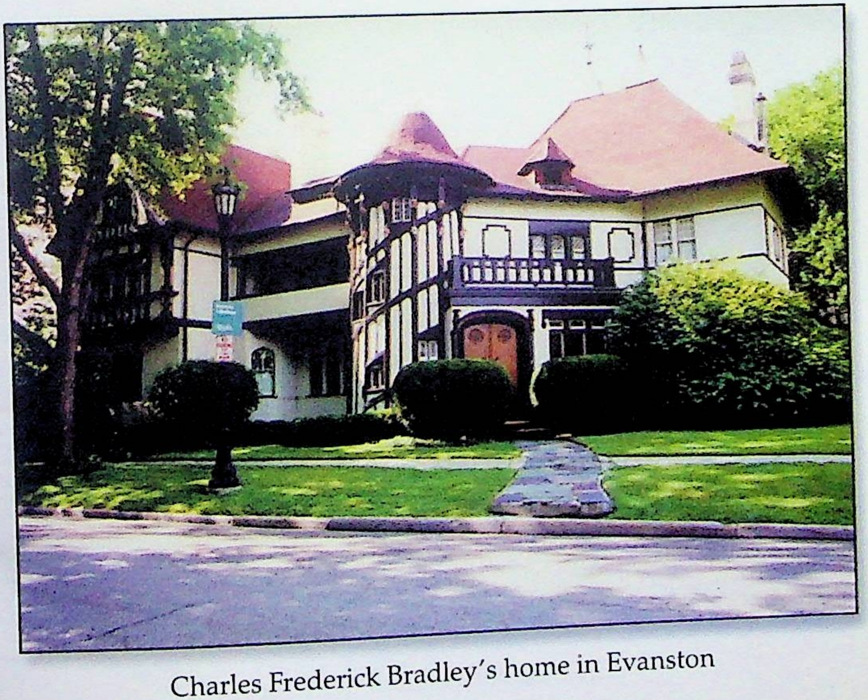
The front part of the Opera House is still standing at the corner of Main and Vermilion, somewhat renovated after the building was largely demolished in 1981 due to structural weakness.

Swamiji left Streator on October 9, the day after his second lecture. While the *Monitor* gave him a rave review, the other newspaper, the *Free Press*, attacked him along with the religion and customs of India. This sparring between two newspaper editors continued up to five days after Swamiji's departure, a situation without any parallel among the ones he faced during his mission to the West. This "Editorial Battle" has been reported in detail elsewhere.[11]

We know Swamiji went to Streator by the Santa Fe railroad (and probably came back by it as well), in which case he had embarked the train at the Dearborn station in Chicago. Completed in 1885, the Dearborn Station at the end of South Dearborn Street at West Polk Street is the oldest surviving railroad terminal building in Chicago. Since that time it has lost many parts, including a huge cupola on the clock tower, and a steeply pitched roof that was destroyed during a fire in 1922. Its shed was removed in the 1960s. The whole station has been restored with only minor changes beyond those mentioned. Although there were a number of railroad stations in existence in Chicago during that time, it is almost a certainty that Swamiji used this station on more than one occasion. Since the Santa Fe railroad had used the Dearborn station exclusively, he definitely used it for his trip to California as well. Its passenger operations ceased in 1971 when it was renovated as office and retail space, and its vast backyard replaced with residential development.

It was not surprising that Swamiji attracted the attention of Jane Addams and was invited to speak at the Hull-House sometime between October and December.[12] Whereas the 1893 winter and spring schedule is available, the fall program is not.[13] All we know now is that some Tuesday evening at 8 p.m., between October and December of 1893, he lectured at the Hull-House; in all probability it happened in October or early November. It was scheduled under the auspices of the Hull-House Working People's Social Science Club. The Club secured interesting speakers from the various World's Fair Congresses to speak on social and economic topics once a week. An opening address of forty-five minutes was followed by an hour of discussions. Working men and women as well as professionals and businessmen constituted the audience of 70-80 people on the average. The subject of his speech was "Economic and Social Conditions of India". In addition to Swamiji, the speakers on the 1893 roster were Miss Susan B. Anthony speaking on "Woman's Suffrage", Mr. William T. Stead, the British journalist dedicated to arousing Chicago to the challenging work of the redemption of her evils, speaking about "The Chicago City Council", and many other prominent national and international figures. Like many other talks by Swamiji, a record of his Hull-House speech has not been unearthed yet.

Elizabeth Boynton Harbert's home in Evanston

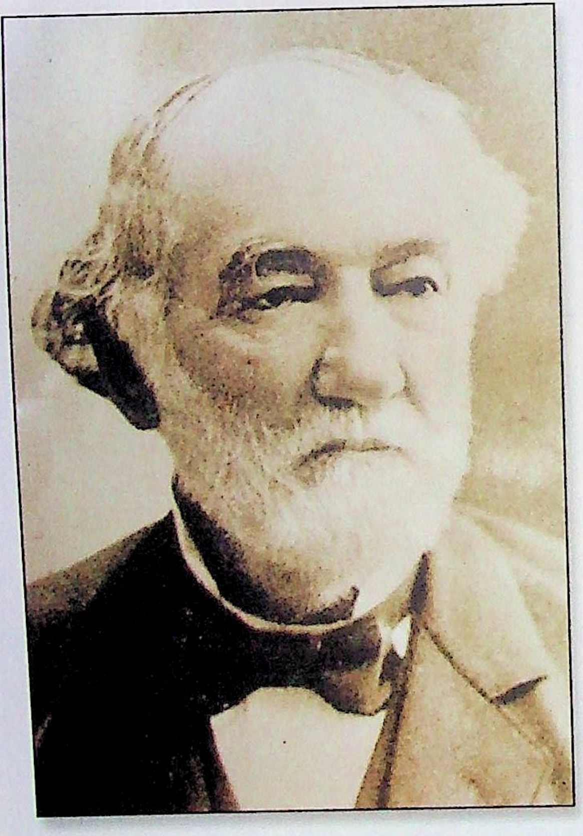


Charles Frederick Bradley's home in Evanston

The Santa Fe station in Streator, *ca.* 1893
Courtesy: The Streator Historical Society

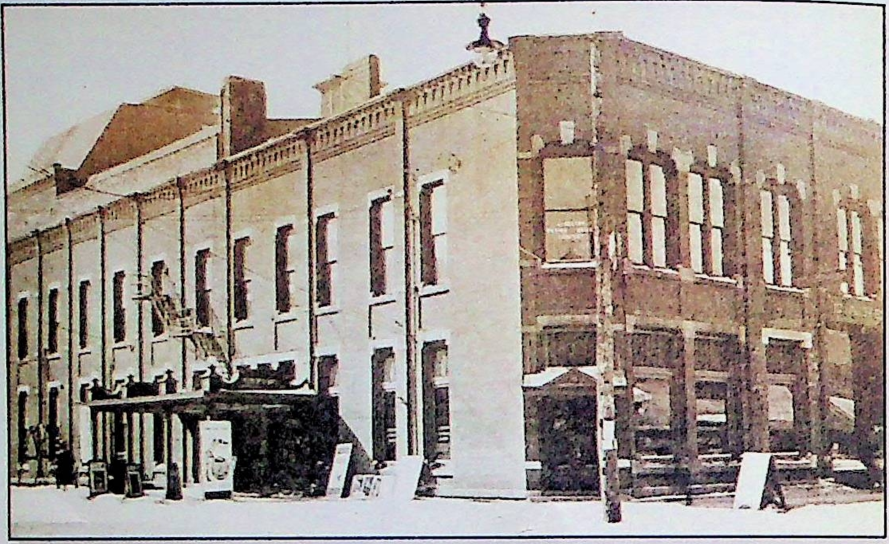
DEARBORN STATION

The Dearborn Station building

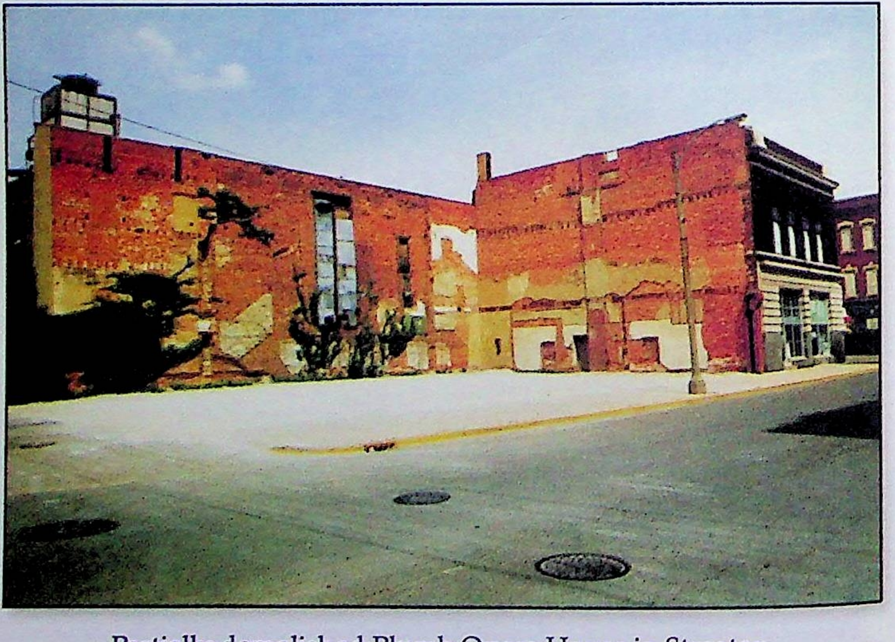


Col. Ralph Plumb
Courtesy: The Streator Historical Society

Jane Addams
Courtesy: Jane Addams Memorial Collection,



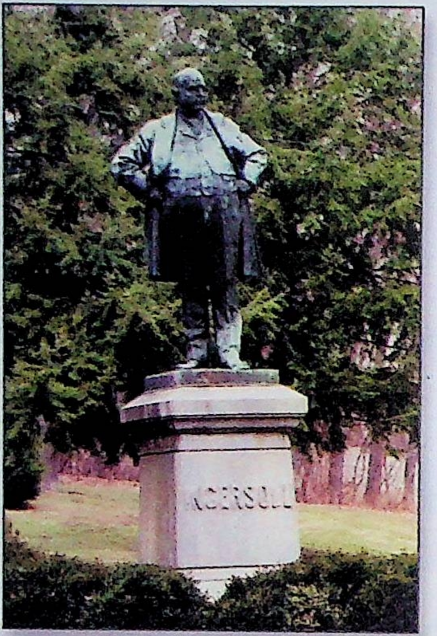
Plumb Opera House in Streator, *ca*. 1893
Courtesy: The Streator Historical Society



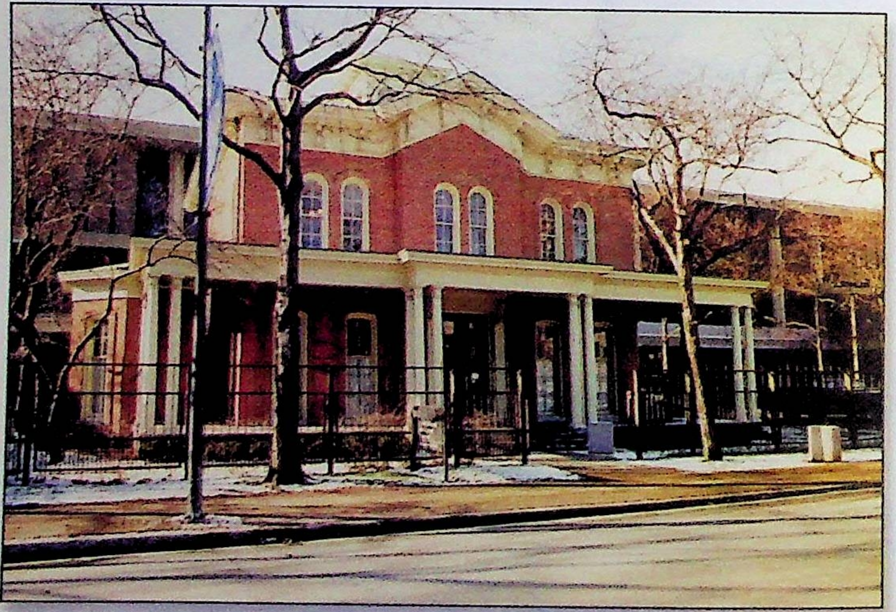
Partially demolished Plumb Opera House in Streator

Photographs of some Hull-House lecturers

Courtesy: Jane Addams Memorial Collection, The University of Illinois at Chicago



Robert Green Ingersoll's Statue in
Glen Oak Park, Peoria, Illinois



Jane Addams Hull-House Museum

The Hull-House was a social settlement, similar to the Toynbee House in the Whitechapel district of London. It was organized in 1889 to aid in the solution of the social, cultural, and industrial problems that inevitably accompany the growth of a large city like Chicago. The principal force behind the Hull-House project was Jane Addams and her friend Ellen Gates Starr. In this large dwelling these two determined idealists tried to alleviate the poverty and barbaric social conditions of the area, one of the worst in the city. In addition to teaching hygiene and language to immigrants, this duo set up the Hull-House as an intellectual oasis where they conducted movements for political and social reforms. Jane Addams, reverently known in the inner circle as "Saint Jane", was a member of the Women's Club and one of the high-profile women in Chicago's upper crust.

Most of the buildings and homes from the 1893 era have long since been razed to make way for towering apartment houses or parking lots. One of the exceptions is the Hull Mansion, still standing at 800 South Halsted in silent recognition of those two clear-eyed idealists. The University of Illinois at Chicago has restored the building and operates it as a museum and a historic site. It was originally built in 1856 for the homestead of one of Chicago's pioneer citizens, Charles J. Hull. But in 1889, Addams and Starr rented it and started the center to help the needy as well as to provide a chance for young women to engage in a moral and purposeful work. The charter gave the objectives of the center as follows: "To provide a place for higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises, and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago." There is also a "Residents' Dining Hall" that is a part of the museum complex, but that was built later.

The Hull Mansion has been designated as Jane Addams Hull-House Museum. Swamiji's photograph adorns a wall of the room on the southeast corner of the building along with other Hull-House lecturers such as Clarence Darrow, Susan B.

Anthony, Frank Lloyd Wright, Ida Wells, and many more. The inscription says—"Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902); Indian Social Reformer; Participates in World's Parliament of Religions." This is the only museum in Chicago displaying Swamiji's photograph.

The Hull-House project catapulted Jane Addams to national and international celebrity as a social reformer, suffragist, writer and pacifist. Sara Bull, who later became more intimately involved with Swamiji's work than any other American, probably knew Jane Addams. If she didn't at that time, she definitely came to know her a few years later for Jane Addams addressed a conference at her house at 168, Brattle Street, Cambridge on February 19, 1899. During Swamiji's second trip to the West, as we shall see later, Sister Nivedita came to know Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr quite well. Sister Nivedita stayed at the Hull-House for some time in 1899 while lecturing in Chicago. As a result of Jane Addams' work with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, she shared the Nobel Peace prize in 1931.

According to the *Life*, sometime during the immediate post-Parliament period Swamiji first met the celebrated agnostic orator Mr. Robert Green Ingersoll. He met him when Ingersoll was almost sixty years old. A person who did not attend college, but studied law and was admitted to the bar at the tender age of twenty, Mr. Ingersoll was then earning six hundred dollars per lecture according to Swamiji's November 2 letter to Alasinga Perumal. Even though Ingersoll questioned the credibility of the Bible and ridiculed the Christian dogmas, his lectures in various opera houses used to command a packed audience. He did not have to travel too far to meet Swamiji; his hometown was Peoria, Illinois, a town about 150 miles southwest of Chicago. The evidence of Swamiji's admiration for this honest, forthright man could be found in his lecture in London in 1896. There he said, referring to a conversation he had with Mr. Ingersoll—"In America there was a great agnostic, a very noble man, a very good man, and a very fine speaker."

In answer to Mr. Ingersoll's philosophy of not bothering about other worlds and squeezing the orange of this life to the fullest, Swamiji had remarked—"I agree with you entirely. I have some fruit, and I too want to squeeze out the juice. Our difference lies in the choice of the fruit. You think it is enough to live here and eat and drink and have a little scientific knowledge.... I want to understand the heart of things, the very kernel itself."[14] Mr. Ingersoll empathized with Swamiji's views, and during one of the meetings asked him to be careful about preaching his new doctrine. When asked why, Mr. Ingersoll said—"Fifty years ago you would have been hanged if you had come to preach in this country, or you would have been burned alive. You would have been stoned out of villages if you had come even much later."[15]

If one looks at the "Creed of Robert Green Ingersoll" one would find only a subtle difference between the fundamental approaches of these two great preachers. The attentive reader will not fail to notice the difference, which is the absence of the concept of "God" in Ingersoll's creed. His creeds were:

> To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits.
>
> —to love the truth, to be sincere, to utter honest words, to love liberty to wage relentless war against slavery in all its forms, to love wife and child and friend, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful in art, in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be familiar with the mighty thoughts that genius has expressed, the noble deeds of all the world, to cultivate courage and cheerfulness, to make others happy, to fill life with the splendor of generous acts, the warmth of loving words, to discard error, to destroy prejudice, to receive new truths with gladness, to cultivate hope, to see the calm beyond the storm, the dawn beyond the night, to do the best that can be done and then to be resigned.

> —this is the religion of reason, the creed of science. This satisfies the heart and brain.[16]

No wonder Swamiji admired this man! If people followed this creed in real life, the savior could take a vacation and we would all wind up at Heaven's Gate regardless. As far as Swamiji was concerned, the subtle difference was in not recognizing the divinity of man, the immortality of the soul.

Lewis puts Mr. Ingersoll's agnosticism in perspective with an anecdote.[17] A Dr. David Greer, unable to attend the 70th birthday celebration of Dr. E. B. Foote, another prominent agnostic of the time, sent him a recorded message on a cylinder. The message said that the cylinder would remain after Dr. Foote was gone and tell its story to his children's children, suggesting the reward which awaits him—immortality. In reply, Robert Green Ingersoll wrote what is considered his final letter, which is quoted here in its entirety:

> My Dear Mr. Greer: (April 24th, 1899)
> What you said to Dr. Foote is beautiful and for all I *know* (emphasis added by Ingersoll in his own hand on the original) it may be all true. Still, I have no evidence that human beings are immortal. Neither have I any evidence that 'there is any wise or beneficial power back of all creation.' In fact, I have no evidence of creation. I believe that all matter and all force have existed from, and will exist to eternity. There is to me no evidence of the existence of any power superior to nature. In my opinion the supernatural does not exist. Still, we can wish in spite of, or against, evidence and we can hope without it.
> Yours always, R. G. Ingersoll.

Doesn't this man remind us of a certain student of the General Assembly's Institution (later Scottish Church College) in Calcutta, before he met his master in Dakshineshwar? The fact of the matter is that there was no Sri Ramakrishna to take Ingersoll to the higher truth!

Swamiji's October 10 letter to Kate Tannatt Woods mentioned his busy schedule during that week—and busy it was! There was the Humane Congress held in the Hall XXIX of the Art Institute on October 11 through 13 under the auspices of the Department of Moral and Social Reform. According to the program he was supposed to speak at the congress on October 12 at 2.30 p.m.—the subject being "The Teaching of Hinduism regarding our Treatment of Animals." But the *Chicago Herald* of October 13 reported that Narasimhacharya, another member of the Indian contingent to the Parliament with whom Swamiji became quite familiar,[18] substituted for him. Swamiji was probably away on another assignment at that time.

A small paragraph in the *Unity*, a Unitarian weekly magazine published from Chicago, said on November 2—"The pulpit at Hinsdale [Unitarian Church] was filled October 15 and 22 by the Rev. Messrs. Vivekananda and Nagarkar, who preached with much acceptance to overflowing houses. A course of lectures by Messrs. Vivekananda and Hirai are also being given and attended to the full capacity of the Church."

This hitherto unknown information will surely make the residents of Hinsdale, at least those who revere Swamiji, very happy that the "Cyclonic Hindoo" touched down on their town and blessed it. Hinsdale, a picturesque village incorporated in 1873, was a progressive little town of about 1600 people in 1893. About 18 miles southwest of Chicago the town was conveniently connected to Chicago and other towns by Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad system. The town attracted wealthy, successful young people wanting to raise families away from the undesirable influences of Chicago.

A group of prominent citizens got together in 1887 forming the Unity Church Society, and decided to build a church. Built in 1888 and dedicated in 1889, this church has been serving the community for over one hundred years. William Channing Gannett, who had accepted the leadership of the Unity Church Society of Hinsdale in 1887, is thought to have employed the talent of a young, and then quite unknown, architect named Frank Lloyd Wright to help design the building.[19] Succeeding Rev. Gannett came Rev. Herbert Taft Root, followed by Rev. A. W. Gould in 1891. It was Rev. Gould who invited Swamiji to speak from the pulpit.

The town newspaper, the *Hinsdale Doings*, did not start until October 1895. So, it is difficult to gather details about Swamiji's visit from any public sources. The Unitarian Church history, however, has this small note in it—"In 1893 the Church was favored by addresses on two Sundays by Mr. Nazarka[*sic*] and Swami Vive Kananda[*sic*] of India. Later a course of lectures was given by Messrs. Hirai of Japan and Vive Kananda. This bit of oriental philosophy found a responsive chord and was inspiring and helpful."[20] The Hinsdale Unitarian Church is located at 11 West Maple Street, on the northwest corner of Maple and Washington. The name of the Church was changed from Unity to Unitarian in the 1930s.

On October 27 Swamiji lectured at the Ladies Fortnightly Club on the subject of Buddhism.[21] This was a very prestigious and exclusive club, drawing its membership from the upper crust of Chicago society. One of its distinguished members was his friend Mrs. Potter Palmer, the indisputable queen of Chicago society. Mrs. Milward Adams (Florence), who later became an admirer of Swamiji, was also a member of this club. The club's goal, like that of many other such clubs in the Chicago area, was to enhance intellectual and social culture. The club address was 10 Van Buren Street, but their meetings, including the one on October 27, were held in Hotel Richelieu at 186 S. Michigan. The hotel was built in 1885, but its front facade was extensively renovated and some addition was made in 1911. After a subsequent alteration in 1982, bringing the building in compliance with the latest code, it still stands today at 318 S. Michigan Avenue. Shy of publicity, the club did not encourage newspapermen to attend such lectures, neither did it record its detailed proceedings. The content of Swamiji's lecture, therefore, still remains unknown.

One of Sister Nivedita's letter provides a piece of information regarding Swamiji's stay in the house of Mrs. L. A. Coonley Ward. Sister Nivedita wrote to Josephine MacLeod —"Mrs. Ward had Swami in her house, once—but he did not like it—and fled to the Hales. She remembers him as 'the most interesting human being she ever met.'"[22] This must have happened during October or early November of 1893, before Swamiji got settled in his home on Dearborn Avenue.

Mrs. Lydia Avery Coonley Ward was a writer, a poet, and a staunch supporter of Jane Addams' Hull-House project. In 1893, her upscale home was in the corner of Lakeshore Drive and Division Street. Jane Addams fondly remembered Mrs. Coonley Ward in her book—"I am grateful for many recollections connected with her beautiful home on the Lakeshore Drive which, however, she insisted be numbered in the Division Street because she liked the sound of it better."[23] When Swamiji met her, Mrs. Lydia Avery Coonley was a widow who lost her husband John Coonley in 1882, and lived with her mother Mrs. Avery at 620 Division Street. Mrs. Coonley Ward died on February 26, 1924. According to the *Chicago Tribune* obituary of February 27 she married Henry Augustus Ward, a scientist, in 1897. The site of her house where Swamiji stayed would now be at 81-91 E. Division, the southwest corner of Lakeshore Drive and Division Street, where an apartment building stands now. When Swamiji mentioned that so many "high society" Chicago doors were open to him during the post-Parliament days, Mrs. Coonley's was one of them.

The Sunday Chicago Herald of November 5 had a brief announcement stuck inconspicuously on page 5:

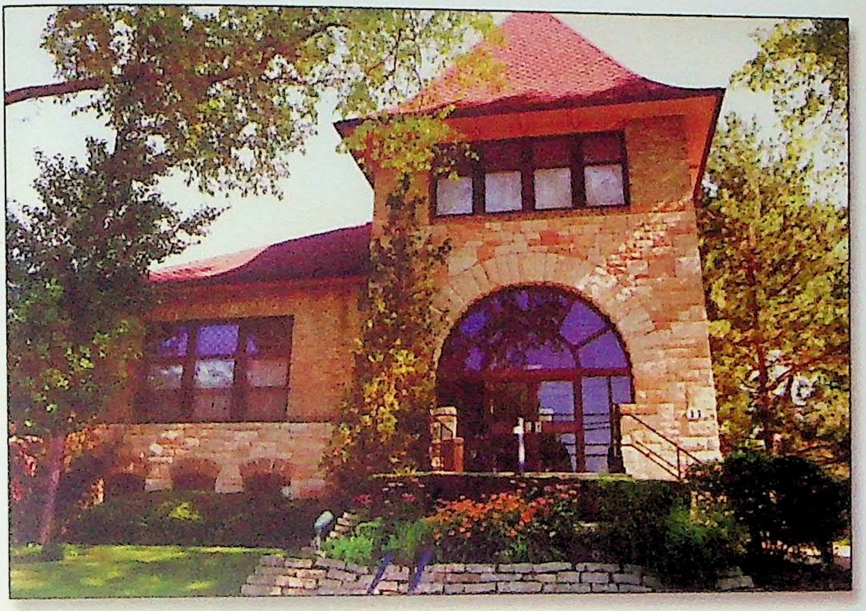
> LECTURES BY HINDU MONK
>
> Suami Vivikananda[*sic*], Hindu monk, will give a parlor lecture in hall 309, Masonic Temple, Tuesday [November 7] and Friday [November 10] afternoon at 3 o'clock. Either Mr. Vivikananda or Virchand R. Gandhi, of Bombay, will speak at the Universalist Church, Stewart Avenue and

> Sixty-fifth street, Sunday evening, Nov. 12, under the auspices of the Union Study Club.

The Masonic Temple referred to in the announcement was at 55 State Street then, at the northeast corner of State and Randolph. The twenty-two story building, built in 1892, was probably the tallest one in Chicago at that time. The building was torn down in 1939. A Walgreen store now occupies that corner. As far as it could be ascertained, the Chicago newspapers, including the *Herald*, did not mention anything about either the subject or the nature of the audience of Swamiji's lecture on November 10. The *Chicago Tribune* of November 8, however, did give a brief report of his first lecture as:

> LECTURE BY THE HINDU MONK
>
> Swami Vivekanandei[*sic*], the Hindu monk who made such a favorable impression in the recent Religious Congress, lectured before an audience of good size, composed chiefly of women, yesterday afternoon at Masonic Temple on the subject of "Hindoo Philosophy." He discussed the various religious beliefs and superstitions giving many illustrations of their causes and effects. But the principle of all religions, he declared, is the same and means that the state of the soul is unconditional and independent. It doesn't require any external force for its existence. "We are all aiming for the same thing, all traveling in the same direction, all going to the same place."

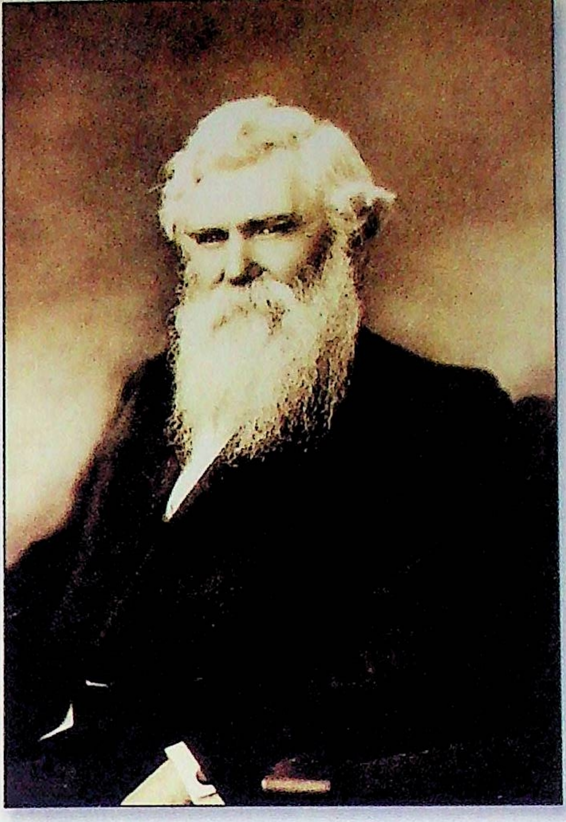
The *Unity* of November 16 also made a belated announcement of Swamiji's scheduled lecture on November 12 at the First Universalist Church in Englewood, an area about 6 miles south of the Art Institute, but didn't mention whether or not he had actually delivered it. Rev. Rufus White, the pastor of the church at that time, had announced— "The first lecture course of the year will begin Sunday evening, Nov. 12. The



Hinsdale Unitarian Church

Hinsdale Unitarian Church pulpit

318 S. Michigan Avenue; then Hotel Richelieu



Rev. Jenkyn Lloyd Jones; *Courtesy: Meadville/ Lombard Theological School Archives* first lecture will begin by either the Hindoo monk Vivikananda[*sic*] or Mr. Gandhi....The admission for the first lecture by Mr. Vivikananda or Mr. Gandhi will also be 25 cents." Englewood Universalist Church, at the corner of 65th Street and Stewart Avenue, is no longer in existence; neither are the copies of the *Daily Evening Call*, the local newspaper at the time. So, it could not be ascertained whether Swamiji actually did or did not lecture there. Since Swamiji did not start his first extensive Midwest tour until November 20, in all probability he did lecture there.

Neither the *Life*, nor the *New Discoveries* mentioned a Chicago clergyman named Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones. Rev. Jones was the pastor of the All Souls Church at the southeast corner of Oakwood Blvd. and Langley Avenue. He was a highly respected Unitarian minister who, as the General Secretary to the Parliament of Religions, had a lot to do with its success. It was his idea of universal religion that had inspired the Parliament. Mullick rationalizes Charles Bonney's choice of John Henry Barrows over Rev. Jones for the chairmanship of the Parliament by saying:

> In view of Barrows' condescending attitude towards non-Christian religions, it is quite curious that Charles Bonney should have appointed him Chairman of the Parliament, instead of Jenkin Lloyd Jones who had labored for the previous ten years to familiarize Americans with non-Christian religions, in his own parish in Chicago, as well as through the Western Unitarian Conference. We may conjecture that Bonney's choice of Chairman was determined by two factors: Barrows was non-controversial and his nomination would ensure the support of Christian denominations, on which the success of the Parliament would have to depend. In contrast, Jenkin Lloyd Jones was a controversial figure in Chicago—his sympathies with Reformed Judaism and other liberal groups were well known; secondly, Jones represented Unitarianism which was regarded as a group on the fringes of Christianity.[24]

Rev. Jones was instrumental in making Chicago a powerful center for the Unitarian movement in America, but he refused to associate the word "Unitarian" with the name of his church. He wanted to include everyone, and had carefully avoided building any denominational fence around the church. As the editor of the *Unity,* which he founded in 1878, he spread his liberal religious views far and wide. He remained its editor until his death.[25] Where Rev. Blake and Rev. Thomas of Chicago (discussed later in the chapter), and a few other liberal ministers from some adjoining towns, invited Swamiji to speak from the pulpits of their Churches, Rev. Jones was not known to have done that.

There is no direct evidence, at least not yet unearthed, that Rev. Jones ever had any type of serious conversation with Swamiji, or ever corresponded with him. It is, however, almost certain that he had met Swamiji during the Parliament sessions, or during one or more of the several receptions attended by both. But this Unitarian minister's correspondence with others throws a significant amount of light on Swamiji and his activities in Chicago.

Rev. Jones, although he clearly respected Swamiji, was not particularly fond of him. This becomes clear from a short comment he had made in a letter to a Miss Cordelia Kirkland on November 7, 1893—"Vivekananda is also in the country yet, but I do not know his whereabouts. He is a meteoric star in whom I have not so much confidence as in the other representatives from the far East."[26] Rev. Jones was mainly referring to Messrs. Mozoomdar, Nagarkar, Dharmapala, and Hirai, all of whom he had invited to speak from his Church pulpit.

Now, why would a well-respected, liberal Unitarian minister, who was genuinely dedicated to the concept of universal religion, make such a remark about Swamiji? To understand that, one has to read his letter to a Miss Grace T. Howe in November, 1893. Grace Howe was a Kenosha neighbor of the Hales at one time—and probably knew

Swamiji through them as early as October or November of 1893. The significance of this letter requires quoting it in its entirety:

> 3939 Langley Ave, Chicago
> Nov 24, 1893
>
> Dear Miss Howe:
>
> Some time ago you asked about Vivekananda. You are too smart! You see too many things. You ask hard questions. I did not answer it right away because I did not want to be found doing an ungracious thing. But honestly I have reasons for not wanting to "boom" the man in the saffron robe much highly as I regard his utterance and clearness of thought. The personality of the man connected with some things I know does not win me and I do not feel that he is as true a representative of the thing that we admire as the humbler ones whom I am helping along, Mr. Nagarkar and Mr. Hirai. Vivekananda will find his own constituency in his own way, but these humbler children of the light, more modest voices of the divine need my help and other helps to get a hearing. When I am with you I will tell you all I know but I do not like to write it on paper. Some time we will talk the matter over. Meanwhile do not say anything to any body that lessen his influence for good or shorten his range of usefulness.
>
> Always your brother
> Jenkin Lloyd Jones[27]

This letter is no doubt significant, because it suggests that it was entirely possible for people, who became extremely jealous of Swamiji following his phenomenal success, to have poisoned the Reverend's mind. In a letter to his brother disciple Swami Ramakrishnananda, Swamiji said in March 1894:

> Mozoomdar vilified me to the clergies attending the Parliament of Religions. He turned them against me by saying that I was nobody but a fraud and a cheat, and that my mendicancy has been contrived after coming here. Mozoomdar poisoned president [chairman] Barrows' mind to the extent that he didn't even speak nicely to me.[28]

If Pratap Mozoomdar could do that to Rev. Barrows, he could have very easily done that to Rev. Jones, and probably did. He was closer to Rev. Jones. For all we know, the Brahmo Samajists could have started their slander campaign against Swamiji here which they eventually carried over to India. Other Unitarian ministers in the area obviously did not share Rev. Jones' opinion about Swamiji, because they had invited him to speak from their pulpits. It is really unfortunate that a man of Rev. Jones' stature was influenced to that extent by hearsay.

If Rev. Jones' letter to Miss Howe was significant, then Miss Howe's reply to him was a thousand times more so because it explains, for the first time, what exactly happened in Chicago that could have triggered the slander campaign against Swamiji. The letter does not bear a date, but in all probability was written in reply to the above letter towards the end of November, or in early December of 1893. If any letter deserves quoting in entirety, this definitely does.

> Kenosha
>
> My dear friend
>
> You write to me of Vivekananda when it is I who should write to you. Since I wrote that letter* I have had the chance of becoming well acquainted with him. He is living with the Hales and they have invited me several times to visit there. So I have had long day—long talks with him and have got that inner sense of him that comes from

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*This probably refers to a letter Miss Howe had written to Rev. Jones earlier. His letter, quoted previously, was in response to that.

just such association and in no other way. I believe thoroughly in his purity, sincerity, and a certain kind of simplicity. It is the simplicity, that is natural to the person of high breeding who has nothing to conceal. I mean nothing in his deeds, but much in his nature that shrinks from too strong light. You know what I mean.

He has a finely trained mind, draws easily on his resources, has had a refined bringing up, has a long line of scholarly ancestors behind him, has a most religious nature, has naturally [underscored by the writer of the letter] dominion over his senses, and with it all a nature so sympathetic that as a child he had a passion for humanity. By nature [underscored by the writer again] understands the sufferings of those beneath him in advantages. He has a rich nature full of mirth, the soul of gayety, when he is not most serious and uplifted.

The kind of a boy I have tried to describe came under the influence of a monk, a half insane mystic as I gather, who so influenced him as to throw the whole force of his nature into religion. His love of God is a revelation to me—and his love of humanity just as dominating. These are the foundations of his spiritual life and on that has been reared a curious admixture of the monk the mystic and the free thinker. It all together makes him the most interesting person I ever met.

I write this to you because you ought to know him. It's too bad to lose such a chance because he is so unlike any one I ever knew. I should like to talk him over with you especially his Chicago experiences. I hear all sorts of things are said about him—how he is a man of the world etc. He gave me the other day the clue to it all though wholly unwittingly. It seems he had a letter to Erskine Phelps and sent it to him on his arrival. They called on him at once took him to their house. He happened to speak of them the other day said "They are very kind friendly people—were very kind to me, but I could not

> live there." When we asked "Why," he said in a perplexed way—"I do not know—I think they are fashionable. They took me to the club, off on a yacht, they drank all the time—when I said I do not drink they ordered it for me just the same. They swore too, all the time. (He meant the men he met). I had seen no Americans. I did not understand it—but I could not live so—I had to go away." The situation was clear to me in a moment. He had no means of knowing whether that was exceptional or the natural way. Mr. Phelps knew but one way to entertain a man. I have no doubt many men noticed the yellow robe, in the company of the revelers, and so....
>
> He shows the Hales his correspondence with the Maharajah who supplies him with money and who is his friend. It is all very interesting and he is a pure sweet strong soul, whom it is a real good to know. I have talked with him much about the Brahmo Somaj. I think I understand something of that situation.
>
> I have written you all this because you are just the one who would enjoy him if you reached him. It is a pity for you not to know him. He is just as sincere as Mozomdar working on different lines. How I wish you could run up here for a little visit but I suppose I might as well ask for the moon. Aren't the sorrel lilies good? With old friendship,
>
> yours,
> G. T. Howe[29]

Miss Grace Howe might not have documented her reminiscences about Swamiji, but her letter is a compendium of her own informal and spontaneous perceptions of him that goes a long way toward establishing the state of his mind during his initial exposure to the American society, especially the Chicago society. People were impressed by the enthusiasm the "Public Swamiji" had inspired during his Parliament speeches, but here was someone just as impressed by the

"Private Swamiji," the real man behind the saffron robe and turban. The letter's true significance lies in the fact that it came from the heart of an illuminated and cultured American of high social standing. One wonders how many others felt the same way about him, but didn't get a chance to express that. Maybe they did, we just don't know about it.

Grace Howe's key words to Rev. Jones were—"you …would enjoy him if you reached him. It is a pity for you not to know him." It was—indeed! They had plenty of ideas and thoughts in common. It seems that Miss Howe did reach Swamiji, and she surely did enjoy him. Rev. Jones never tried, or probably he was too embarrassed to have written that letter and just did not want to face Swamiji.

Now who was this Erskine Phelps? Erskine Mason Phelps, according to a rather limited source of information, was a fifty-four year old businessman at that time who came to Chicago in 1864 and founded a highly profitable footwear business. In 1891 he sold his business to Edwards Stainwood Shoe Co., then the largest of its kind in the Midwest. Phelps stayed on as a director. As the vice president of Central Church, president of Hahnemann Hospital and National Business League, and a member of several prestigious clubs Erskine Phelps was in the top echelon of Chicago's high society.[30] He was married to Anna Wilder and their home address was 1703 Indiana Avenue. The site is now a parking lot for a condominium complex, across the street from the former site of Dr. Perkins' house at 1628 Indiana Avenue where Swamiji stayed for a few days during the spring of 1896.

By this time the reader, if he has followed Swamiji's early days in Chicago, must have sensed one more thing Miss Howe's letter just might have settled. If he hasn't—let's see if we can do some sleuthing together. Mark the words in that letter—"It seems he [Swamiji] had a letter to Erskine Phelps and sent it to him on his arrival." In the context of the letter, doesn't it mean arrival in Chicago from India? Let us go back to Swamiji's initial days in Chicago in July 1893. He arrives in Chicago, and he has a letter from a Varada Rao from Madras addressed to someone important in Chicago. Swamiji mentioned in his letter that the gentleman was "one of the directors of the Fair." Along with forty-four other Chicago luminaries E. M. Phelps was listed as a director of the World's Columbian Exposition.[31] Put two and two together, and we come up with the solution of the "100 year old mystery"—it was the Phelps family Varada Rao introduced Swamiji to. Case closed!

One question still remains—how did Varada Rao from a far away place like Madras know the Phelpses from Chicago? At this point, we can only surmise it was probably business that brought them together. Since Erskine Phelps was in shoe business, the Varada Rao link can be established if the latter was somehow connected with the export-import of leather or shoes. Attempts to confirm this have so far failed due to lack of information about Varada Rao. Whatever could have been the common bond, Varada Rao had probably no idea that his contact in Chicago was insensitive to the needs of a monk and was only trying to be hospitable the best way he knew how.

It is entirely possible that Swamiji, after he had his lesson in "entertainment Chicago style," did not mention the incident to anybody except Miss Howe, and that too "unwittingly." He was not the type of person to speak ill of his host. The incident, of course, became common knowledge, thanks to some of Swamiji's countrymen, but he protected the Phelps name. He continued to say that they were kind, friendly people, but apparently never made any further contact with them, even though he stayed across the street from them at some point. Sister Gargi was right on the money when she said—"The chances are that Swamiji never became intimately associated with the people to whom Varada Rao introduced him."[32] Why would he? So the authors of the *Life* would have had no idea as to what exactly happened, unless they had talked to Miss Howe. They apparently didn't.

Grace Thatcher Howe wrote the letter from Kenosha, Wisconsin, a town on Lake Michigan just across the state border from Illinois. The Hales had a summer home there until 1890. The town was conveniently located on the Chicago & North Western Railway, about 51 miles from Chicago. The natural beauty of its location, the salubrity of its climate, the capability of its harbor resources, and its equidistance between the commercial emporiums of Illinois and Wisconsin made Kenosha a very desirable place for people of all vocations. The town was incorporated in 1841, and its population in 1890 was around 6,500. Grace Howe lived there at 268 Park Place with her nephew Frank Howe. Frank was the son of her brother Col. James H. Howe, one of the pioneer and prominent residents of Kenosha. Richard Frank Howe was listed in the City Directory as the vice-president of Northwestern Wire Mattress Co. Their house no longer exists, having been consumed by the growth of the park area around the Kenosha Public Library.

The Hale house at 423 Chicago was very close to Grace Howe's residence. Built in 1850 by a member of the Hale clan the house still stands at 6028 8th Avenue. Chicago Street was renamed 8th Avenue. The owner of the house, at least since 1879, was listed in the property tax roll as Samuel Hale, George Hale's father. The Hale family owned that house until 1890 when it was sold to Dr. William Farr, a surgeon for the Chicago and North Western Railroad. The Kenosha Women's Club acquired the building in 1923, remodeled and expanded the building, and have occupied it since then.[33] Since the Hales did not own any house in Kenosha in 1893, or thereafter, it is doubtful Swamiji ever visited Kenosha. But Kenosha had a very close relationship with Swamiji's American family.

Grace Howe was remembered from time to time by Swamiji in his letters. In a letter to "Mother Church" in May of 1894 Swamiji commented on Grace Howe's seemingly rational, reason-based approach to religion. Referring to the people from Boston, he said:

> Oh, they are so, so dry—even girls talk dry metaphysics. Here is like our *Benares* where all is dry, dry metaphysics!!

> Nobody here understands "my Beloved." Religion to these people is reason, and horribly stony at that. I do not care for anybody who cannot love my "Beloved." Do not tell it to Miss Howe—she may be offended.[34]

Swamiji wrote again to Isabelle McKindley in August 1894—"Kindly convey my best regards and love to Miss Howe and Mr. Frank Howe."[35] There were several other such instances in his letters where he inquired about Grace Howe. She must have moved from Kenosha to Chicago, because 1896 Chicago directory lists her for the first time at 52-54 Walton Place, where the Hale and McKindley sisters were also staying. While Swamiji's American sisters lived in Apt. R, Grace Howe lived in Apt. N with nephew Frank. On her own initiative, or through the Hales or McKindleys, Grace Howe kept in touch with Swamiji. In 1899, during his second visit to the West, we see her attending the party Mary Hale threw in his honor.

Frank Howe lived in the Walton Place apartment with his aunt Grace until 1899 when he moved to 158 Rush Street. He probably got married around that time. The Illinois Census Record of 1900 shows him married to Abby Howe and living at 468 Elm Street. The house still exists at 77 E. Elm Street. Both Grace and Frank Howe disappeared from the Chicago scene after 1907, in all probability she moved away from Chicago after that, probably to Maine, or first to Kenosha and then to Maine. It is highly unlikely that she ever set her eyes on the first edition of the *Life,* the book that depicted the life of the man who was "unlike any one she ever knew." Miss Howe died in Castine, Maine in 1920 at the age of 82.

Grace Howe's obituary in *Kenosha Evening News* of July 29, 1920 brought out some details of her life that depicted her as a prominent literary and social figure in as diverse places as Kenosha, Washington and New York:

> During the administration of President Grant few women were more prominent in Washington than the

> former Kenosha woman....Miss Howe was admitted to the most exclusive official and social circles in Washington. She was a brilliant conversationalist, widely known as a reader of the best in literature and she had a close personal grasp on the inside political life in Washington....Her home in New York for years was a literary shrine for men and women who knew the best things in literature and she was the most gracious of entertainers.

Harpers, a publishing company, once offered her a substantial amount of money to write about the inside political life in Washington. But she refused to capitalize on the story of personal friendships*. Now, that was the sign of a genuine lady!

Going back to Rev. Jones again, Swamiji most probably did not ever visit the All Souls Church. Rev. Jones, however, included extracts from five of Swamiji's Parliament speeches in his book *Chorus of Faith,* which was a compilation of 167 extracts from 150 speakers at the Parliament. So he did give Swamiji's speeches much higher than average consideration. In the concluding section of his book Rev. Jones mentions his vision for the next Parliament and the appropriate site for it. "I have sent my mind around the globe" he said, "to find a fitting place for the next Parliament....At first I thought that Bombay might be a good place, or Calcutta a better place, but I have concluded to move that the next Parliament of Religion be held on the sacred banks of the Ganges in the ancient, new city of Benares, where we can visit these brethren at their noblest headquarters."[36] The book also includes a letter from Dharmapala, written in mid-ocean, when he was on his way home:

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*Nowadays, it has become almost a fashion in Washington to respond to the call of the almighty dollar by writing such books and thereby betraying the trust and confidence of friends.

Pacific Ocean, Oceanica, October 24, 1893

MY DEAR BROTHER JONES:- This is what I have entered in my diary on the 3d of October. "I will help Bro. Jones to carry out his object to hold the Parliament of Religions in Benares. I will revisit America two years after. I will prepare the way for the Benares Congress. The first Parliament was held in the youngest city and the first in the twentieth century will be held in the oldest city. The Maharaja of Benares will be asked to become the patron.

On the 12th inst., I made the following entry : "I will work hard to make the second Parliament of Religions a success. Bro. Jones and Pipe, I hope, will work hard to make it so. Maharaja of Benares and Norendra Nath Sen must be asked to give their services. The Theosophical Society must cooperate with the committee. We will succeed. Liberty loving religion will triumph, Sarnath (in Benares) is the best place to build the hall. Let the Buddhist government be asked to cooperate."

The editor of *The Hindu*, Madras, Mr. Norendra Nath Sen, editor of the *Indian Mirror*, Calcutta, are leading Hindus whose cooperations are necessary. I hope you will send report of the Parliament's work to the Maharaja of Benares, India. We have seven years before us. Let us lead pure lives, and work, and we shall succeed. Peace and blessings to you. Yours ever,

H. Dharmapala[37]

This was supposed to take place in the year 1900, but apparently did not materialize. There is no indication that Swamiji was ever aware of this plan. It is incomprehensible that Dharmapala would try to pull off such a monumental undertaking without even consulting him. In Swamiji's only published letter to Dharmapala, probably in August or September of 1894, there was no mention about this plan. His one comment in that letter—"Hope, your noble work will succeed."—however, could be interpreted as referring to Dharmapala's plan.[38]

It would be unfair to say that Rev. Jones did not at all subscribe to Swamiji's cause. He did, at least to some extent. In a letter, written on October 4, 1893 to Dr. Carl von Bergen, Rev. Jones wrote:

> The time has now come when I shall be glad to confer with you concerning any work that you may be able to get in this country...I fear it will be hard to get an audience; but I am very willing to try, and we will do all we can for you. Perhaps if we could form such a combination as you have with Vive Kananda [referring to Swamiji's lectures along with those of Dr. Bergen's in the First Congregational Church in Evanston] we could make an assured success of it so as to be able to give both of you some compensation.[39]

Rev. Jones knew that joining hands with Swamiji would spell success in the lecture circuit. He must have had something to do with Swamiji's engagement in Streator or at least known about it prior to Swamiji's visit to that town. On October 4 he wrote to Rev. L. J. Duncan, the Pastor of the Church of Good Will in Streator—"Let me hear how Vive Kananda does for you."[40] Swamiji did very well, as we already know. Around that time one Mr. Harvey wrote to Rev. Jones seeking Mr. Pratap Mozoomdar for a speaking engagement. Since Mr. Mozoomdar was in poor health and had already left Chicago, Rev. Jones wrote back —"But Nagarkar and maybe the clear headed Japanese Hirai, and the saffron-robed Vive Kananda, and Prof. Carl von Bergen ... are here and probably available. If you could secure any of them ...and could give them from $75-$100 plus expenses, I think you could get some of them."[41]

A Chicago clergyman who praised Swamiji at every opportunity was Dr. Hiram Washington Thomas. Prior to Swamiji's lecture in Madison, the *Wisconsin State Journal* of November 18 printed Dr. Thomas' endorsement of him:

> Of the many learned men in the East who took part in the great World's Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda was the most popular favorite, and when it was known that he was to speak, thousands were turned away for want of room. Nor was it curiosity that drew the masses; but those who heard him once were so impressed by the magnetism of his fine presence, the charm and power of his eloquence, his perfect command of the English language and the deep interest in what he had to say, that they desired all the more to hear him again. It will be opportunity of a lifetime for the cities of our land to see and hear this noble, earnest, loving Brahmin, dressed in the costume of his order, telling the true story of the religion and customs of his far off country.

Dr. Thomas was one of the most profound and advanced thinkers in Chicago at the time. A Methodist minister at first, he fell in disfavor of the Church because of the excessive liberality of his sermons. His interpretation of scriptures resulted in his conviction in a heresy case. He was expelled from the ministry and the Church, in what his counsel chose to call "a test case." On November 7, 1880 he preached his first sermon in Hooley's Theater, and from that grew the successful "People's Church of Chicago." The Church later met at McVickers Theater at 82 Madison. The site for the old McVicker's Theater, which was demolished a long time ago, is the building at 21-25 West Madison. The Sunday School of the Church was maintained at the Third Unitarian Church at Laflin and Monroe, where Swamiji had given a speech earlier on September 24.

Swamiji left Chicago for Madison, Minneapolis and Des Moines on November 20. He left Des Moines on November 30, but was in Minneapolis again on December 14. Up until now it was not known whether he had come back to Chicago after Des Moines and then gone again to Minneapolis, or had spent those intermediate fourteen days in other towns in the corn country. But now we know he visited the People's Church, and addressed Rev. Thomas' congregation, most likely on December 10. The subject was "Divinity of Man", and the *Unity* reported the entire speech almost word for word on December 14. Unlike the speech in Ada, Ohio in February of 1894 on the same subject, and documented in the *Complete Works,*[42] this was not a compilation of the reporter's own notes and interpretations. Since this speech has not been published anywhere, the *Unity* report is quoted here in its entirety:

CHURCH DOOR PULPIT
THE DIVINITY OF MAN
A Lecture by Swami Vivekananda
Reported by Unity

> Swami Vivekananda, of Bombay, a Hindu monk, is a man of handsome presence. In speaking his voice goes in regular, rather monotonous waves of sound, now up, now down. He wears a long orange toga or gown, belted at the waist with red girdle, dark-red pantaloons and boots, and a lemon-colored turban covers his black hair. In the street an additional turban and a fashionable American black cloth ulster or surtout varies the Oriental costume.
>
> Dr. Thomas, in introducing him to the audience, said: "The speaker of the evening comes from a land of ancient scholarship, in whose philosophy are found the roots of the philosophy of England, Germany, France, and all Europe, whose religion is the most ancient in the world, whose Bible antedates the Hebrew Bible—and he speaks to us in our own language."
>
> Swami Vivekananda then spoke as follows:
>
> "As we look about us we see two sides of life, external, internal; matter, external form, and the internal life of thought. If we look only at the external we are crushed, man is only an atom, and almost not that, in the universe; but in the world of thought he seems more powerful. In

the heavens are stars, suns and worlds one thousand—one hundred thousand times bigger than the earth, and as the firmament contains the stars, so the eternal contains all. Take the law of gravitation. A stone falls,—two, three stones fall,—and Galileo says, he sees the law of gravitation. Thus after we see many phenomena, we reduce them to unity. This is human reasoning, finding unity, reducing the many phenomena to laws.

"The external and internal phenomena have always engaged the attention of thinking men. Can the external and internal be reduced to unity?

"There are three schools: the Dualist, the Materialist and the Idealist. We pass over the Dualist; he gives up in despair. The Materialist says there is only the external, the other is the outcome of the former. You must believe in matter. The Idealist says there is only thought, mind, there is no matter. To the Hindu both are partially true, partially wrong. Can matter and mind be reduced to unity? The Materialist says mind does not exist.

"Is this table an existing something? Is it independent of the whole universe? Soon we see there is both independent and relative existence. In the matter of heat and cold you cannot think of one without the other, you cannot separate them; without comparison the idea cannot come.

"There is this story in Sanskrit: A prince was asked, 'What is the most wonderful thing in the world?'

'It is this, that men and women die and the rest think that they will never die, but will live on forever and ever.' Why is it when we see all men die about us, why do we not think that we shall die? It is because we shall not die, and we act upon that. If we were mortal all action would cease, man would not look to the future, man would never work. When he works it is because he knows he will not die. In and through this lies the great secret of the universe.

"The universe is relative, but there is something absolute, something that never dies, and this is the motive power of all our actions. Whether we see the stars or not, they are there. We must not take relative things for absolute. We see the stars against the sky, and because there is a background we are able to see the stars; so because there is a background of absolute and independent existence, we are able to see the things that are dependent and relative.

"In the internal, spiritual world man believes he will not die. If the body is myself it will die, for the body changes every moment; it is only a current of matter. What right have I to call it the same? Every seventh year every particle is changed. We see there is sameness and change. But there is something for background; absolute existence is the background of mind and body; the Eternal Being is at the back of every existence; that Being we call God, and the mind, soul. The animal kingdom differs from the vegetable, and the vegetable from the mineral. The dog and the elephant are made of clay; both are clay; as clay they are one; as beings there is a sense in which they are one. There are related beings, and beings are various.

"In the moral world, unselfishness is the basis of all morality. We give up the individual, the little circle of diluted selves, and march toward the universal. The underlying basis of all religions is the regaining the absolute and unconditional nature of the soul. If the soul is relative, it is bound, degraded. Everything that changes dies. Immortality, unconditionality, the Infinite—are one and the same. There cannot be two Infinites. If there were, they would condition each other.

"The Infinite is like the ocean. All bring water from the ocean. All religions come with their different cups to this ocean for water. So the different religions are different stages of growth, and they take in the Infinite, according to their purity of heart.

"Religion is not the outcome of the weakness of the human heart; it is the outcome of strength, it is the effort of the soul to regain its nature. A wise man was asked, 'What is the most important thing for man to do?' 'Be friendly to human beings, be kind and helpful to those in distress.' 'Is that all?' 'No; be happy.' 'Is that all?' 'No; see only what virtues men have, never see their faults.' 'Is that all?' 'No; believe in men as you believe in your own brother.' 'Is that all?' 'No; this it is. See yourself in another shape. Not your brother, but your own form multiplied,—you, in another shape.'

"Religion is the manifestation of the divine nature. How can man change? Can the leopard change his skin? Whence can the sinner get a supply of virtue? He is a diamond; when the dust is washed off, the divine nature becomes manifest. Develop a man on a low, brutal plane and there is the murderer; develop him on a higher plane and we have a saint. The doctrine of original purity was proclaimed before the doctrine of original sin.

"There is this story of the lion: As a lioness came upon a flock of sheep, a cub lion was born, and the lioness died. The lion grew up with the sheep, ate grass, bleated, and when the sheep fled the big lion fled with them. He was a big lion, but he did not give up the sheep nature. A lion came upon the flock and found this full-grown lion, which fled from him with the sheep; but he waited, caught the sheep-lion, held him down, and told him he was a real lion! He bleated a reply. Then he took him to a lake and showed him his image,the image of a lion, in the lake. He roared: the sheep-lion roared; he found he was a lion, not a sheep. So man is not a sinner, but God's son—this is what the Hindu religion teaches. From the Vedas we have a legend. There were two eagles on a tree; the one below ate fruits, bitter and sweet, and was miserable. The one on the top was full and perfect, and wanted nothing below its own nature. It was a majestic eagle, with no fear or misery. The one below felt he could be like the one above, and as he came nearest the reality of his own existence, he became like him.

"Whatever may have covered it up, the soul is unconditioned, immortal, it has only to know its own nature and that will make it free. Do not expect to make men better by criticism, but by giving them higher ideas. Criticism makes men worse. Praise men; place higher planes before them and they will come up to them. You know how difficult it is to cut a log against the grain. Man must come up. Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity existing in man—and we can help the process of this manifestation. This is not the idle dream of philosophers. Thousands and thousands of the thinking people of India have been built up on this idea.

"It is told that Alexander the Great, conversing with a monk, was so pleased with him that he asked the monk to come with him. The monk refused. 'Do you know I can kill you?' The monk replied: 'You cannot kill me. I am immortal—you can only kill the body.' Alexander said: 'Had I not been Alexander the Great, I would be this monk.'

"At Benares I knew a good and wise monk. He seldom spoke, but wrote his answers to the questions of the people. The English Government was hanging Hindus and monks, because it declared them to be mutinous in disguise. The English authorities ordered this monk whipped till the blood spouted out from his body. They cut him with knives and poured lime-juice in the wounds, but he declared: 'All is divine. Ye are gods, still ye are gods—I am a soul, what can kill me?'

"In the Vedas, a prophetess, when her disciples ask about God, tells them: 'You are immortal. You are really He. When you realize this, then will all doubt cease, all fear will vanish, imperfection will go forever; for the soul becomes divine by realizing the divine.' Paul said: 'In Him

> we live and move and have our being.' Why are ye afraid? Fear not; thou art a spirit. Sorrow not, for thou art a spirit. Death cannot come; thou art a spirit, thou art He! Thou art He!"

Swamiji was known to have visited the Cook County Normal School in Chicago.[43] Col. Francis Wayland Parker, the principal of the school, was his host. Col. Parker came to this school in 1883 from Quincy, Massachusetts where he had gained considerable reputation as superintendent of schools. He introduced innovative changes in the school system, and by 1889 his institution in Chicago became strictly a professional training school for elementary teachers who availed themselves of the "New Education" as enunciated by Col. Parker. He had succeeded in making Cook County Normal School the model teacher-training school in the country. The growth of the whole child—physical, mental, and spiritual—was the mark he set for the school. Located at the corner of 68th Street and Stewart Avenue, it had become the Chicago Normal School in 1896, and after several name changes became Chicago State University in 1971. In 1972 the university moved to its present location at the corner of 95th Street and Dr. Martin Luther King Drive.

The reminiscences of Henrietta Holmes Earl, a student of that school during Swamiji's visit, indicate the wide reputation Col. Parker's school enjoyed. People from foreign countries came to study the school's innovative methods of teaching. Mrs. Earl recalled a certain Hindu boy in her class whose parents came from India for that purpose. Though it happened when she was a mere child, she still remembered Swamiji's brilliant eyes and vibrant voice when Col. Parker ushered him into the class and he spoke to the students. She watched this Hindu boy kiss Swamiji's robe as he walked by. When she asked the boy why did he do that, he answered—"The man is Swami Vivekananda, a great saint from my country." She reminded the boy that there were no saints anymore. The boy nonchalantly replied—"Not here in your country, but we still have them in India."[44] The innocent remark by the proud little Indian boy to his newly acquired American friend is extremely significant in the context of the treatment Swamiji received from some of his grown-up countrymen in America.

When Swamiji was in California during his second visit to the West, Sister Nivedita was negotiating with Col. Parker to bring an Indian girl named Sontoshini to be educated in Col. Parker's school. She wrote to Miss Josephine MacLeod in January of 1900:

> Col. Parker—the great educationist offers to *educate and maintain* Sontoshini for me if I can get her here by next October. He is enthusiastic about my plans—and in this way would give Sontoshini the manual training necessary to enable her to come back and teach the art-work, including textile, metal, wood, pottery, and other things. It is a GREAT opportunity. What does Swami say about the possibility of bringing the child?[45]

The plan eventually did not materialize. Col. Parker's reverence for Swamiji was also mentioned by Sister Nivedita in another letter to Miss MacLeod—"Dear Col. Parker...takes so much glory to himself for 'liking Swami.' 'I did like him'—he says boastfully..."[46]

On December 28, the *Unity* reported—"Vivekananda has been finding more and more successfully a listening constituency in the west [meaning Midwest], and is now a much sought for speaker on the lists of the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau." The exact date when Swamiji's contract with the lecture bureau became effective is not known. Dr. Hiram W. Thomas' endorsement of Swamiji, quoted earlier from the *Wisconsin State Journal*, was actually from a letter Dr. Thomas wrote to Mr. Henry L. Slayton, president of the Lecture Bureau. Sister Gargi says— "Unfortunately, we cannot be much more precise than the *Life*, which tells us that 'it must have been in the very late autumn or the early winter months,'" and also says it could not have happened before November 2.[47] It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that Swamiji signed the contract with the lecture bureau sometime between November 2 and November 20, when he left for Madison. Actually, his trip to Madison marked the beginning of his extensive tour of the Midwest. It is doubtful he could have arranged such a tour all by himself, during which he spoke in a remote place like Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.[48]

The Chicago Directory lists Slayton Lyceum Bureau at Suite 36, Central Music Hall. This building, at 69 State Street, stood at the southeast corner of State and Randolph Streets. The Bureau was involved in scheduling appearances at the auditorium of Central Music Hall. Swamiji must have frequented the Bureau office, a site now occupied by Marshall Field store. Coincidentally, the Music Hall building also housed the studio (Suite No. 60) of one of his staunchest admirers in Chicago, Mrs. Milward Adams. Swamiji came to know her in late 1894, as we shall see later. He lectured in her studio in the spring of 1896. Central Music Hall was absorbed by the ever-growing Marshall Field store in 1901.

The Marshall Field store had been rebuilt at the corner of State and Washington Streets in the 1870s after the Great Chicago Fire. The store eventually expanded to include the entire square block by the year 1914. Surrounded by State, Washington, Wabash and Randolph, this square block had Swamiji's footprints all over it. If he was looking for a phonograph to send to the Maharaja of Khetri in India, or any other special item, he must have shopped at this store. If he had to look up his friend Dr. James P. Mills, he would be coming here. The Mills family is discussed later. Central Music Hall and the Lecture Bureau, as mentioned earlier, were also in the same square block. The extension at the corner of Wabash Avenue and Washington Street, built in 1892 to accommodate the World's Fair crowd, is the only part of the Marshall Field store still existing from that era.

The end of 1893 was a bad time for Chicago. With the closing of the fair and approach of the cruel Chicago winter, unemployment skyrocketed—and the city became filled with beggars, peddlers, tramps, and jobless men and women. William Stead, who had come to Chicago to see the World's Fair and participate in the Parliament of Religions, saw the condition of the poor in Chicago and went to work to persuade influential people to act in support of the less fortunate ones.

For Swamiji the year 1893 was an overwhelming success. In less than four months this unknown monk from India had won the hearts of the American listeners with his dynamic personality and the utter purity of message. Never before had they come across anyone who was the living embodiment of universality, harmony, and spirituality, and whose life was in complete consonance with his teachings. Swamiji came; he saw; he spoke; and he conquered.

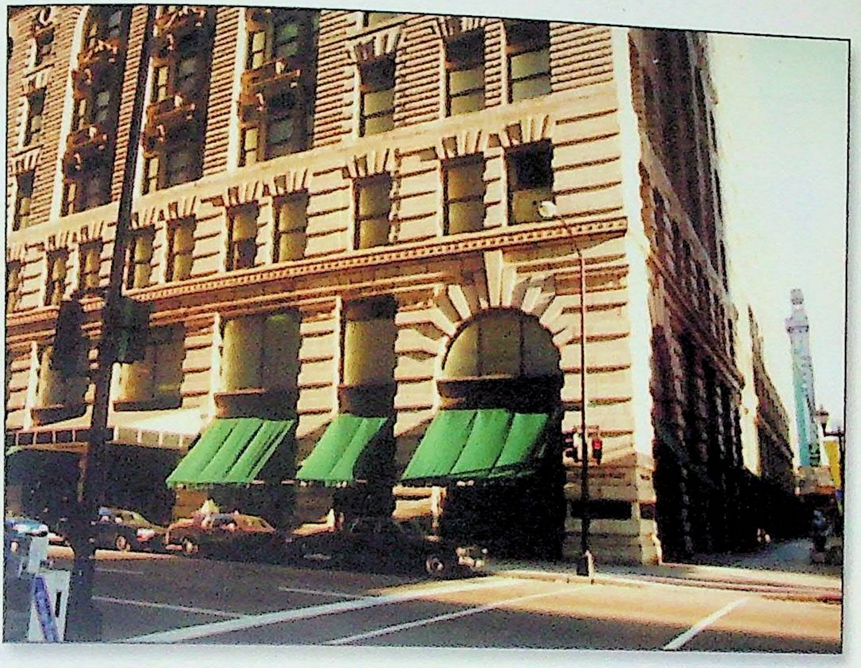
CHAPTER 8

1894 AND BEYOND

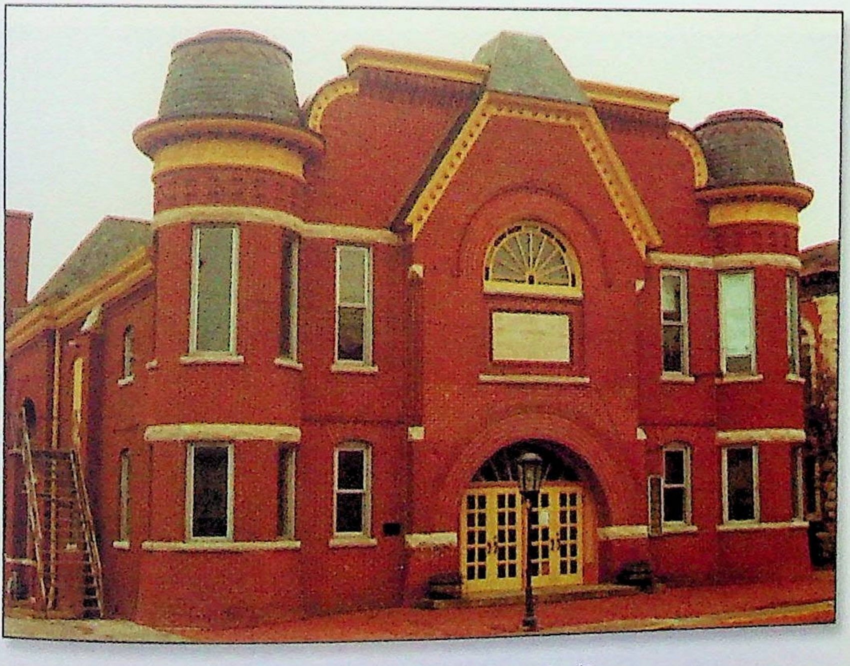
ENDING THE FIRST VISIT

It is highly unlikely that Swamiji spent the 1893 Christmas away from his adopted home at 541 Dearborn Avenue. After all that is what Christmas is all about, spending time with your family sharing love and affection. It was his first Christmas in this country, and his first taste of the Chicago snow. The Midwest then was hardly the place where people would listen to an upstart heathen during the Yuletide. So, he was free to spend that time of the year with his American family. He probably spent the ever-snowy Chicago winter trying out his newly acquired galoshes and having outings with his sisters in Lincoln Park throwing snowballs at each other. The first glimpse of snow from very close quarters must have been exhilarating for one born and raised in Calcutta. There, the closest one comes to seeing snow is watching people drag blocks of ice, covered with sawdust, along the sidewalk.

Swamiji left for Memphis on January 12, 1894 at the invitation of the members of the Nineteenth Century Club, and was gone for ten days. After that he was back in the Chicago area until February 12 before leaving for Detroit. He was invited there by Mrs. John Bagley, whom he most probably met during one or more of the numerous receptions he had attended in Chicago during the Parliament days. Mrs. Bagley was one of the Lady Managers of the World's Fair, and in that capacity she could have had several opportunities to meet

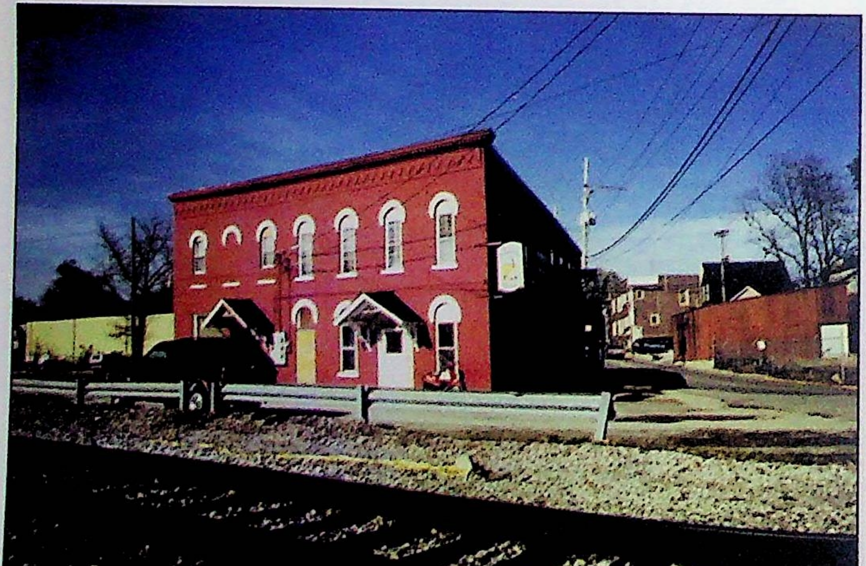


Marshall Field store; corner of Washington and Wabash

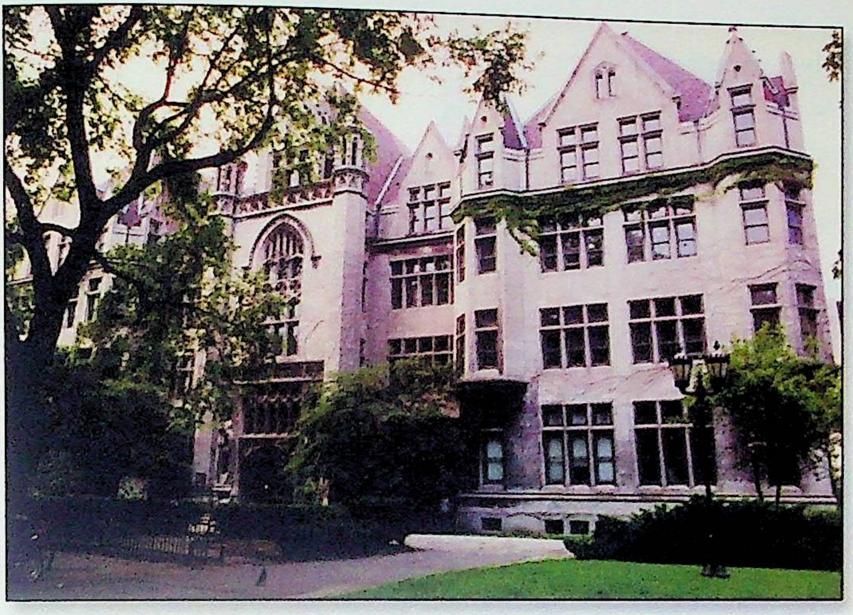


Memorial Hall, Valparaiso, Indiana

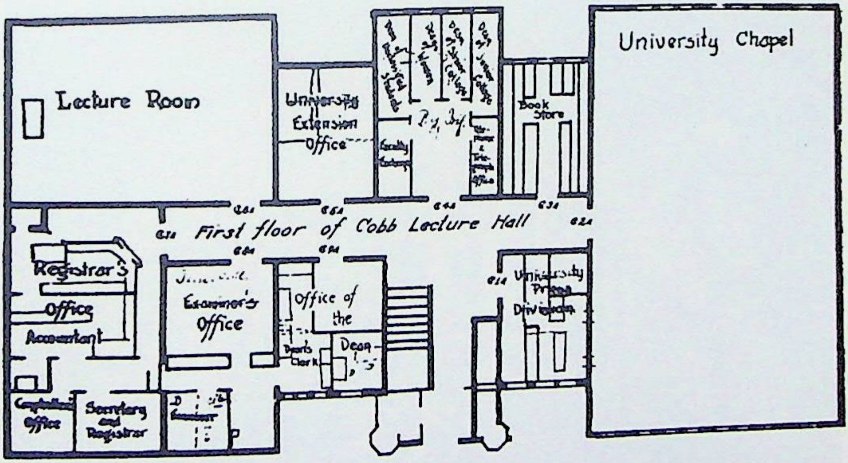
Railroad Depot, Valparaiso, Indiana, *ca.* 1894



Franklin House, Valparaiso, Indiana



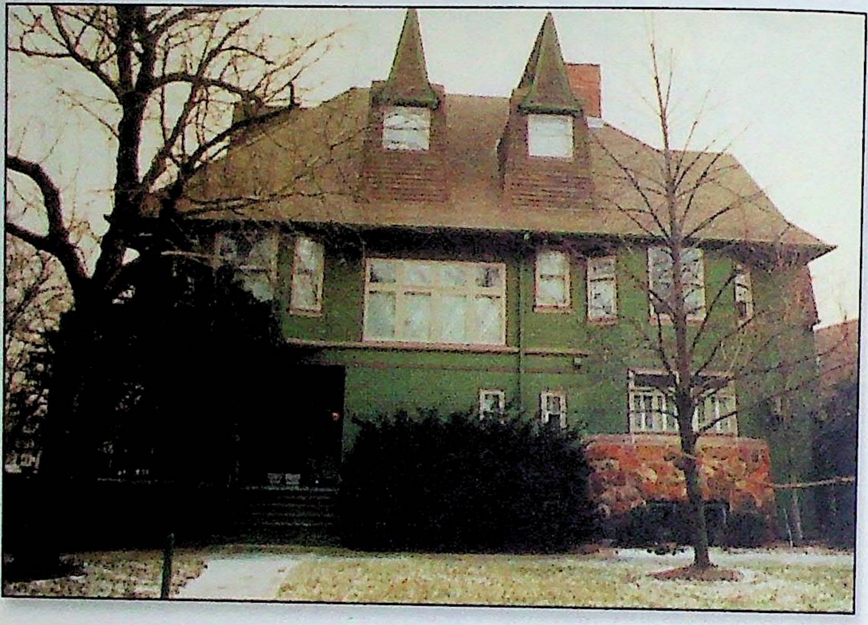
Cobb Hall, University of Chicago


Lecture Room
University Extension Office
University Chapel
Book Store
Faculty Exchange
First floor of Cobb Lecture Hall
Registrar's Office
Accountant
Examiner's Office
Office of the Dean
Dean's Clerk
University Press Division
Comptroller's Office
Secretary and Registrar

Cobb Hall, first floor plan

Cobb Hall floor plan, *ca.* 1893

Courtesy: Dept. of Special Collection, University of Chicago Library



Alice Stockham's home in Evanston

Roosevelt University; then Auditorium Hotel

Swamiji. His lectures in Detroit and eventual fight against the deliberate and concerted attack by some clergymen have been well-documented by Sister Gargi who called this period "one of the most important in his American mission, almost equal in significance to that of the Parliament of Religions."[1]

Swamiji came back from Detroit through Ada, Ohio around the last part of February. We learnt only recently that he went to Ada at the invitation of the Ohio Normal University to take part in a lecture series.[2] He spoke there on February 23. On February 27 he gave a lecture in Valparaiso, Indiana, a town 70 miles southeast of Chicago. Since there was a gap of three days between the Ada and Valparaiso lectures, it is probable that he came back to Chicago to spend some additional time with his family before going to Valparaiso.

Ada and Valparaiso lectures were probably his last ones arranged by the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau. The day Swamiji was on his way to Ada, his contract with the Bureau was broken through Senator Thomas Palmer's intervention. Thomas Palmer was the president of the World's Columbian Exposition and a senator from Michigan. In addition to Mrs. Bagley, Mr. Palmer also hosted him during his Detroit days. So, it was only for a period of about three months Swamiji was under contract with this "liar of a Slayton," a phrase he not-so-fondly used to refer to Henry L. Slayton, the Bureau's president.[3] Swamiji had figured to have lost about $5,000 due to his contract with the Lecture Bureau. The art of negotiation to deal with these cutthroat enterprises was hardly in the repertoire of this mendicant monk from the East.

Valparaiso was then a town on a busy east-west railroad network. The station where Swamiji disembarked from the train is still there, although the depot next to it burned down in 1993. But the hotel Franklin House next to the station, built in 1857 and the second oldest building in the town, has survived the test of time. Instead of waiting in the chilly waiting room of the depot, He probably waited for his train in this hotel with a hot cup of tea or coffee on that cold February day. Since Valparaiso also had a Normal School, it is possible that the Valparaiso University was instrumental in bringing him to the town for the lecture. The new Memorial Opera House where Swamiji lectured in Valparaiso is still there at 104 Indiana Avenue, proudly displaying the historical connection. He was greeted by one of the largest audiences ever assembled there until that time. The subject of the lecture was "Customs in India." The Lecture Bureau used a part of Dr. H. W. Thomas' letter to Henry Slayton (which they also used for the Madison lecture) to announce Swamiji's upcoming lecture in the *Valpariso Messenger*.[4]

John D. Rockefeller, one of the world's wealthiest men at that time, is said to have met Swamiji in Chicago sometime in early 1894. As the story went, Rockefeller had heard from his friends about the Hindu monk. One day, on an impulse, he stormed into the study room of the house where Swamiji was staying at that time. After some discussions Swamiji told Rockefeller that God has given him all this wealth to help people. Rockefeller left the meeting somewhat irritated, but came back after a week or so and told Swamiji of his plan to donate a large sum of money towards financing a public institution. When he was expecting Swamiji to thank him, Swamiji said—"It is for you to thank me."[5] His statement must have surprised Rockefeller. But what he really meant was that it was he who gave Rockefeller the opportunity to exercise his power of benevolence, and for that he should be thankful to Swamiji.

The veracity of the above story has never been unequivocally confirmed. However, it has been reported that once when Rockefeller visited the university "students serenaded him: 'John D. Rockefeller, wonderful man is he/Gives all his spare change to U of C.' Moved, Rockefeller replied: 'The good Lord gave me the money, and how could I withhold it from Chicago?'"[6] Could it be that Rockefeller only repeated what Swamiji presumably had told him?

It is not known what institution benefited from Swamiji's discussion with Rockefeller. Actually, he already had been contributing large sums towards various causes of religion and benevolence. It could have been the University of Chicago because, although he had contributed a significant amount towards the founding of the university several years earlier, he made a further pledge of half a million dollars in a letter to the university on October 31, 1893.[7] It is true that the University of Chicago was not a "public" institution, but what Rockefeller had probably meant was "an institution for the public." If this was the donation the *Life* was referring to, it did not happen in "early 1894" as reported in the *Life*. There was another possibility, however. The *Chicago Herald* of October 2 had a short item under its "Personal Paragraph" section:

> J. D. Rockefeller, who furnished the funds necessary to set the Chicago University [University of Chicago] on its feet, has just bought 500 acres of land near Tarrytown, N. Y. at a cost of $750,000. It is understood that he has in mind the founding of some great institution which shall be of public benefit, but the exact nature of his intentions has not yet been made public.

Whichever it was, October, or early November of 1893 was a more probable period for Swamiji's alleged encounter with Rockefeller. This was the time when Swamiji was presumably staying with various rich and famous Chicago citizens as their guest. It must have been on one of those occasions Rockefeller approached him. According to the story it could hardly have been the Hale house, where he was most probably staying in early 1894.

Rockefeller's University of Chicago was blessed by at least one visit by Swamiji, when he spoke to a group in the University Chapel during the Chapel service on March 1.[8] The Chapel service was open to the faculty and students every day at 12.30 p.m., and consisted of responsive reading, Scripture reading, or singing of a hymn or prayer. Occasionally, leading divines of the country or renowned scholars were invited to speak at the service. The subject of Swamiji's speech was

"Modern Schools of Hinduism." The University Chapel was located in Cobb Hall, which exists on the west side of the quadrangle on Ellis Avenue even today, as a part of the original campus of 1892. Cobb Hall was the first building of the university, erected with donation by Silas B. Cobb. The architect was the official University Architect, Henry Ives Cobb, no relation to the donor. The University Chapel was on the first floor of the building taking up almost all of the north end.[9] The room no longer exists the way it did at that time. It has been converted to four large lecture rooms, two on each side of a hall. It is unlikely that the Indian students studying at the university realize that Swami Vivekananda lectured in the same area where they have been sitting while listening to their sociology, English, or history professors.

On March 9, 1894 Swamiji again left Chicago for Detroit to continue his defense against the vicious attacks by his antagonists, the orthodox clergymen, and then went on to New York. He came back to Chicago again on May 24. He stayed in his home this time, although "Father Pope" and "Mother Church" were away at a health resort in Warren County, Indiana, taking a dip in the mineral springs to rejuvenate their bodies. His adoptive sisters were home. Mr. Hale's sister Mrs. James Matthews, whom Swamiji used to address as "Mother Temple" was chaperoning the four girls.[10]

This was one summer in Chicago when Swamiji didn't get involved in lectures and classes. He hadn't met Florence Adams or Josephine Locke yet, the duo who took the primary initiative to arrange those for him later. Lincoln Park was where he probably spent a considerable amount of time, looking at the various attractions it offered. There were plenty of those amongst the beautiful shrubs and flowers in the park. The incidents in the park, mentioned in an earlier chapter, most likely took place during this period. After all, this was the only summer Swamiji didn't feel rushed to see something, do something, or go somewhere. His intentions were very clear from his letter to Isabelle McKindley from Boston in early May, when he wrote—

"However, as soon as 19th [May] is over—one leap from Boston Bake-beans to Chiçago smoked-hams [referring to the city's famous meat-packing industry] and then I will have a long breath and rest, rest for two three weeks. I will simply sit down and talk—talk and smoke."[11] About a week later he wrote in a similar letter to Mrs. Hale—"I long to fly to Chicago and shut up my mouth and give a long rest to mouth and lungs and mind. If I am not called for in New York, I am coming soon to Chicago.[12] Swamiji was not; and he did.

Since he mostly spent time at home, not much can be found about Swamiji's 1894 summer trip to Chicago from the local newspapers. He had just started receiving some encouraging letters from influential people in India endorsing his credentials. Swamiji didn't care about others, but he was extremely concerned about his close friends and benefactors being swayed by the published articles that tried to portray him as a fraud. He was trying to contact those people to reassure them that he was not. He was going through a period of tribulation, and this was reflected in his intensely emotional letter to Mary and Harriet Hale towards the end of June, where he tried to "express the inexpressible":

> The great Hindi poet, Tulsidasa, in his benediction to his translation of the Ramayana, says, "I bow down to both the wicked and holy; but alas! for me, they are both equally torturers—the wicked begin to torture me as soon as they come in contact with me—the good, alas! take my life away when they leave me." I say amen to this. To me, for whom the only pleasure and love left in the world is to love the holy ones of God, it is a mortal torture to separate myself from them....
>
> "Let the world love its many, we have but one Beloved—the Lord. We care not what they say; we are only afraid when they want to paint our Beloved and give Him all sorts of monstrous qualities. Let them do whatever they please—for us He is the only beloved—my love, my love, my love and nothing more....

> Excuse my mad scribbling, excuse my foolery in trying to express the inexpressible. It is to be felt only.[13]

As Sister Gargi puts it —"Thus, during a period of outward trials and tribulation, Swamiji's inner mind and heart were filled with spiritual love and joy."[14]

The sisters and "Mother Temple" were taking good care of Swamiji, as he wrote to his vacationing mother in Indiana—"We are doing very well here. Last night the sisters invited me and Mrs. Norton and Miss Howe and Mr. Frank Howe. We had a grand dinner and softshell crab and many other things, and a very nice time. Miss Howe left this morning."[15] We know about Grace and Frank Howe, but there is not much known about Mrs. Norton. She could be a neighbor, or one of Mary Hale's Christian Scientist compatriots; there is not much of a trail to follow.

It seems Swamiji was in touch with Mrs. Potter Palmer, because he was aware of her impending visit to the Orient and requested Rao Bahadur Narasimhachariar to show her the work being done in India to help women...."I hope she will find a warm reception at your hands and be helped to see a little of our women as they are. And I assure you she is no missionary, nor Christian even as to that. She wants to work apart from all religions to ameliorate the condition of women all over the world."[16] Bertha Honore Palmer, the "Queen of Chicago," had found a place in the heart of the itinerant Hindu monk. He also mentioned having seen the play "Charlie's Aunt" in Chicago during this visit.[17] The play was running that time (from May 6 to August 12) at Hooley's Theater at 149 Randolph Street. The present address for the site is 124 W. Randolph where the James R. Thompson Center stands now. The only other known incident in Chicago during this time was that he encountered Narasimhacharya again.

Some of Swamiji's letters written during this period, especially those addressed to India, had "Chicago" or "U.S.A." at the top right corner of the letter. In a letter to one of his Madras disciples he had clearly spelled out the address issue:

> …it is a great mistake to address me letters to any other place but Chicago. It was my mistake of course at first, because I ought to have thought of the fine *Buddhi* (intellect) of our friends who are throwing letters at me anywhere they find an address at the top….Don't forget the address 541 Dearborn Avenue (not street), Chicago, or c/o Thomas Cook, Chicago. Any other address would cause much delay and confusion, as I am continually traveling, and Chicago is my headquarters….[18]

This letter had June 28, 1894 date and 541 Dearborn Avenue address on it. Swamiji left for New York on that day, but he was still advising his Indian correspondents to write to his Chicago address where his family would arrange to send the letters to wherever he was. At least during all of 1894 his letters to India, even if these were written from New York, did not show a New York address. It was not until early 1895 that he had instructed his followers in India to write to him at his New York address at 54 West 33rd Street which, according to him, replaced 541 Dearborn Avenue as his permanent place of business from then on.[19] His home? It was still where his heart was—541 Dearborn Avenue! Swamiji's logical insistence on using Lyon, Hale, or Thomas Cook addresses as his Chicago mailbox has robbed us of some valuable information regarding his exact whereabouts.

In his June 28 letter Swamiji expressed some strong sentiments about his lack of support from his countrymen. He was expecting letters from them appreciating his work in America on behalf of the Hindu religion and thanking the American people for extending their hospitality towards him. He thought that these letters, if published in newspapers here, would offer him the recognition and legitimacy he badly needed to advance his cause. This was very clear from the letter he wrote to Mr. Desai from Chicago:

> Primarily my coming has been to raise funds for an enterprise of my own….Now lecturing for a year in this

> country, I could not succeed at all (of course, I have no wants for myself) in my plan for raising some funds for setting up my work. First, this year is a very bad year in America; thousands of their poor are without work. Secondly, the missionaries and the Brahmo Samajists try to thwart all my views. Thirdly, a year has rolled by, and our countrymen could not even do so much for me as to say to the American people that I was a real Sannyasin and no cheat, and that I represented the Hindu religion.[20]

Earlier he wasn't altogether sure whether he wanted to stay in this country past the 1894 summer, but in his June 28 letter he firmly stated—"America is the best field in the world to carry on any idea; so I do not think of leaving America soon."

He went back to New York on June 28, and didn't get to visit his home again that year. He spent the rest of the summer lecturing in various cities on the east coast and attending the Green Acre Conference in Eliot, Maine. The conference was organized by Miss Sarah Farmer, daughter of Moses Farmer, a reputable electrical engineer. Moses Farmer died in March, 1893 before he could demonstrate his latest invention at the World's Fair in Chicago. Sarah Farmer, who was inspired by the Parliament of Religions, came back later to Chicago to meet with Charles Bonney of the World's Congress Auxiliary to discuss her plan for the Green Acre Conference. She eventually invited Swamiji and Dharmapala "to speak at Green Acre on a universal platform for the comparative study of religious systems."[21] She could have met Swamiji in Chicago, depending on when exactly she was in the city. Swamiji was in an exalted spiritual state at Green Acre as evident from all the bits and pieces of information and his own letters. According to Sister Gargi—"it was at Green Acre that he taught for the first time in America, the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta (though as far as we know, not naming it as such) to a group of eager listeners."[22] Among this group were Mrs. Mary Pratt and Miss Cora Stockham from the Chicago area.

In his letter to Mary Hale from Green Acre Swamiji mentioned a Mrs. Pratt from Kenilworth, an affluent northern suburb of Chicago—"One Chicago lady, Mrs. Pratt of Kenilworth, wanted to give me $500; she became so much interested in me; but I refused. She had made me promise that I would send word to her whenever I need money, which I hope the Lord will never put me in."[23] Mrs. Mary Pratt, who lived in a house designed by Daniel Burnham at 322 Kenilworth Avenue (the house is still there as a historical landmark), was a devout spiritualist. During the World's Fair she was known to have opened her doors to various spiritualists and Orientals interested in the occult science.[24] It is unlikely that Swamiji ever visited her house. Mrs. Pratt was convinced that the spirit of her deceased husband was still present in the house, and that the spirit of her departed horse was residing in a large box in the barn. She did not exactly fit the profile of people who would be genuinely interested in Hinduism or Vedanta philosophy. Swamiji definitely would not have endorsed her idea of a music recital for spirits, for which she used to fill up the room with empty chairs. Mary Pratt, however, still remains the only person in Chicago area who had offered Swamiji substantial monetary help. Swamiji, of course, did not accept it. Looking at the story quoted by Sister Gargi,[25] the "enthusiastic woman," who was trying to persuade him to write a book "representing the superiority of spiritual forces," could be no other than this Mrs. Pratt. Her definition of "spiritual" was slightly different from that of Swamiji's.

Miss Cora Stockham was another Chicago area woman Swamiji mentioned fondly in his letters from Green Acre. Daughter of Dr. Alice B. Stockham of Evanston, Miss Stockham probably met Swamiji during the Parliament sessions or during the following week when he lectured in the Congregational church in Evanston. According to the church directory, the Stockhams were not active members of the church. Alice Bunker Stockham was widely known as a physician, author, and suffrage worker. The *Unity* magazine of October 12, 1893 had reported that Dr. Carl von Bergen, the Swedish delegate to the Parliament and the Unitarian Congress, and a co-lecturer with Swamiji at the Congregational church, was staying with a Dr. Stockham of Evanston. In 1893, the Stockham home was at 222 Burnham Place in Evanston. The house, built in 1889-90, is also an Evanston landmark like the other two houses Swamiji visited in the city. It is very possible that Swamiji had visited their house at that time, or later, because he wrote to Mrs. Hale on April 10, 1894—"There was a certain Mrs. Smith in Chicago. I met her at Mrs. Stockham's."[26] In 1894, Dr. Stockham moved to her newly-built house at 921 Ridge Avenue. If Swamiji had visited her that year or later, he would have gone to that address. This house also exists, after receiving a considerable amount of modification to its exterior.

Miss Cora L. Stockham was listed in the city directory as the editor of *Kindergarten* magazine and living with her parents. Cora Stockham made a "bathing dress" for Swamiji for dipping into the Piscataqua river in Green Acre, an exquisitely picturesque river separating the State of Maine from Massachusetts.[27] As a magazine editor Miss Stockham was probably familiar with a camera. The photographs she took of Swamiji at Green Acre have been invaluable to the Swamiji historians. One of them, taken outside a tent with Sarah Farmer, M. H. Gulesian of Armenia, and Edward Everett Hale, which Sister Gargi mentioned as "yet to be unearthed," appeared in the commemorative brochure "Green Acre on Piscataqua."[28]

In 1911 Dr. Stockham moved to Alhambra, California, now a suburb of Los Angeles. According to the obituary on December 14, 1912 in the *Press*, Alice Stockham died on December 2 at her home in Alhambra. Her daughter, Mrs. Cora Skaife, also lived in the same town. It seems that sometime after 1900 Cora Stockham got married and moved to California. We don't know which came first. The Skaife family had apparently decided not to include their names in the Alhambra City Directory. Consequently, nothing could be found about their whereabouts in Alhambra.

Swamiji had written to Mrs. Hale in December of 1894 that if he could "snatch up a few days between the lecture in Brooklyn of the 30th and the next series in New York" he would come to Chicago, but he didn't give the exact date.[29] After delivering a lecture in the Pouch Mansion on December 30, 1894, he left New York and came back home to Chicago on January 1 to celebrate New Year's Day with his American family. "I owe much to the Hale family and I thought to give them a little surprise by dropping in on New Year's day"—he wrote to Mrs. Bull from Chicago.[30]

It was probably not a coincidence that Swamiji was in Chicago on that particular day. In the Auditorium Theater that evening the World's Congress Auxiliary was celebrating the commemoration of the Parliament of Religions held in September of 1893. The opening address was by Charles Bonney, and the session started by the ringing of the "peace bell" which was first rung a little over a year ago; and was supposed to be the "death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal." Swamiji probably attended this meeting, but from the newspaper accounts it appears that he did not give any speech, nor was he seated on the platform along with other Chicago dignitaries.

There is not much known about his stay in Chicago between January 1 and January 17, 1895, except that he held a series of classes and shopped for a gown.[31] For the latter, he probably visited Marshall Field store at the corner of Washington Street and Wabash Avenue. According to the letter he wrote to Emma Thursby, he held classes every day at one Mrs. Adams' room at the Auditorium Hotel and at least one class at the Plaza Hotel on January 17 arranged by a Miss Josephine C. Locke. The letter also mentioned that Swamiji had attended an organ concert in the Auditorium Hotel or Theater at Mrs. Adams' invitation.[32]

The Auditorium Hotel Building is still standing on the northwest corner of Michigan and Congress. This was once a part of a large complex of hotel, restaurant, and theater erected in 1887-89 at a cost of 3.5 million dollars. Its 270 foot observation tower at the top was a favorite tourist attraction where people could take a bird's eye view of the city. It was the culmination of the architectural imagination of Louis Sullivan and the engineering talent of Dankmar Adler. The Auditorium Building, owned by Roosevelt University since 1946, is one of Chicago's important cultural and architectural landmarks. The university deserves a lot of credit for restoring and modernizing the building, but at the same time leaving the old ambiance intact.

The Auditorium Theater was a part of the hotel complex. Swamiji had visited this theater on several occasions, the first time most probably to attend a symphony orchestra concert as a guest of the Lyons during the Parliament days. The theater was then also the home of Theodore Thomas' Chicago Orchestra. The theater which closed in 1940, but fortunately was left untouched, opened its gate once again in 1967 due mainly to the persistent effort of the university management.[33]

The Chicago address on the letter to Mrs. Thursby was 541 Dearborn Avenue, but Swamiji could have stayed elsewhere as suggested by Sister Gargi based on Cornelia Conger's recollection.[34] He probably didn't write his temporary address on the letter and used the Hale home as his mailbox. According to Miss Conger, Swamiji came back to Chicago a year or so after the Parliament and stayed with the Lyons for a short time and then moved to an independent flat. Miss Conger says:

> On this second visit, he only stayed with us for a short time. He knew he could teach better if he lived in his own regime of food and of many hours of meditation. It also left him free to receive many who came to him for help. So my grandmother helped him find a simple but comfortable little flat, but I do not recall that I ever saw it.

It seems very likely that Swamiji lived independently, at least for a while, because his classes were usually followed by some personal counseling. The Hale home would not have been the ideal place for that. Here was another instance where one cannot track down Swamiji's footprints because of his mail-box system. Even if he wrote letters from this flat, these had 541 Dearborn Avenue or just Chicago, or America as return addresses. It is conceivable that he stayed in a small apartment in the Auditorium Hotel itself, since he held classes there every day. Mrs. Adams could have easily arranged for that, aided by Mrs. John Lyon who lived close by.

Mrs. Adams, in whose room Swamiji held daily classes at the Auditorium Hotel, was the wife of Milward Adams, the manager of the Auditorium Theater. It is doubtful if she was present during Swamiji's October 27 lecture at the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, of which she was a member. If she was, she apparently was not formally introduced to Swamiji. According to Swamiji's letter to Mrs. Hale, he first met her in Sara Bull's house in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in December of 1894.[35] That meeting was very significant, and Sara Bull was the catalyst that brought these two human dynamos together. It was actually Mrs. Adams who was the principal force behind arranging lecture classes for Swamiji in Chicago, and had been his constant sponsor ever since she met him.

Florence James came to Chicago in 1880, and established a studio in the Central Music Hall at the southeast corner of State and Randolph Streets. She was a highly intellectual woman, versatile and gracious, and had the unique capacity of bringing into action in people the dormant energies of the spirit and body. She was a "priestess of the cult of beauty" and inspired in her students the courage of self-affirmation. In her studio "the dowagers and debutantes of society, rich in all the externalities that wealth commands, but sometimes deficient in the fine inheritance of the amenities, have been invested with the department that compels admiration and taught the treasured secret of the ways that charm."[36] In short, Florence Adams had been teaching the wealthy how to be classy. An expert in the art of enhancing one's self image and manner of presentation, she taught not from the textbook, but by the transmission of her own personality. Entertainment personalities like Ethel Barrymore and Antoinette Sterling came to her for lessons.[37] Swamiji also took some lessons from her, as mentioned in his letter to Isabelle Mckindley—"I also took a few [lessons], but no use; the ever increasing load in front does not allow me to bend forward as Mrs. Adams wants it. If I try to bend forward in walking, the centre of gravity comes to the surface of the stomach, and so I go cutting front somersaults."[38]

When Florence James was teaching in her studio, Milward Adams was the manager of the Central Music Hall. The marriage of Florence James to Milward Adams in 1882 was a union of art and culture, expanding the spheres of activity for both. In the early nineties, when Milward Adams became the manager of the Auditorium Theater, they moved into the Auditorium Hotel. In 1898, Florence Adams eventually moved her studio from Central Music Hall to the Fine Arts Building, presently at 410 S. Michigan Avenue. This was originally the "Studebaker" building built in 1885 by the company for the assembly and display of their carriages and wagons. In 1898, the building was converted to house studios and theaters for various artists and craftsmen. The ground floor showroom was replaced by two music halls and storefront shops, and the domes, the attic, and the original facade of the eighth floor were removed and replaced with a three-story addition.[39] Swamiji could only have come to this building for holding classes in either 1899 or 1900, which in all probability he did not. Sister Nivedita, however, did visit this studio in 1899.

If there was one person in Chicago, other than the members of his family or maybe the Lyons, that can truly be called a diehard supporter of Swamiji—it was this unique individual Florence Adams. She died in 1910 in her room in the Auditorium Hotel and was mourned by the Chicagoans who came to appreciate her inner beauty. A grateful student of Mrs. Adams collected some of her memorabilia in 1943. Included in this was a memorial speech given at the Fortnightly Club on April 14, 1910 that reads in part:

> She had another quality less common among those who devote themselves to the art of expression. It was a deep spirituality. The profound and subtle questions of life and immortality was ever present with her especially in later years, and she loved to discuss them with those who looked at the world from the spiritual side. A delicate vein of mysticism led her to appreciate the subtleties of Oriental thought, without accepting its conclusions.[40]

It is no wonder why she was so devoted to Swamiji!

The original pastel of Florence Adams, drawn by Maude Stumm in 1904, is also a part of this memorabilia collection. Her Swamiji connection was evident from her Memorial Committee members' list. None other than Mrs. Clarence M. Woolley (nee Harriet Hale)* was one of the committee members. The Memorial Committee established an annual award in her memory at the University of Chicago. The Florence James Adams Prize for excellence in artistic reading was awarded for the first time in 1912, and has continued ever since.

The first mention of Josephine Locke in Swamiji chronicles was in his letter to Emma Thursby, but there were many more later. He always inquired about Miss Locke in his letters to his family members, and referred to her as "sister Locke." She was extremely enthusiastic about arranging classes for Swamiji in Chicago and had done so on many occasions. She adored Swamiji from the bottom of her heart and used to get very emotional dealing with criticism hurled against him from any quarter. Miss Locke was the Director of Art in the Public Schools of Chicago, and also the Chairman of the Women's Committee in charge of the Congress on Manual and Art Education at the World's Fair. She was on the platform with other Chicago dignitaries during the Parliament of Religions commemoration at the Auditorium Hotel on January 1. She lived in Apartment

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*One of Swamiji's sisters, Harriet Hale, married Clarence Woolley in 1897.

No. 613 of the Plaza Hotel. The class could have been arranged in her room or in a meeting room of the hotel. The Plaza Apartment Hotel was at 646-670 N. Clark Street, on the southeast corner of North and Clark opposite Lincoln Park. Where the Auditorium Hotel was just over two miles away, the Plaza Hotel was less than 5 minutes walk from 541 Dearborn Avenue. The hotel has since been demolished and the Latin School of Chicago stands on the site now.

Harriet Monroe's vivid commentary of "Swami Vivekananda the magnificent" and his speech at the Parliament have been abundantly quoted in the literature.[41] Part of it has been included here and in a previous chapter. Harriet Monroe, the founder of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, was the patron saint of the new American poetry of realism and imagery. She was the sister-in-law of John Wellborn Root, the architect who shared the responsibility for the construction of the World's Fair with Daniel Burnham until his untimely death in 1891. She was contracted to write the dedicatory poem—"Columbian Ode" for the World's Columbian Exposition. She heard Swamiji during the Parliament and said:

> One cannot repeat a perfect moment—the futility of trying to has been almost a superstition with me. Thus I made no effort to hear Vivekananda speak again during that autumn and winter when he was making converts by the score to his hope of uniting East and West in a world religion above the tumult of controversy. Later I knew him quite well, and always I shall remember an encounter and talk years after in Fifth Avenue, when his eyes soared up to the tip of a skyscraper, and he said something which made me realize that all this newness was as romantic to him as the old things are to us, and that his vision entrusted to our fresh energies his hope of a more united and glorious world.

Harriet Monroe, along with her younger sister Lucy Monroe, lived at 484 Dearborn Avenue just a block away from the Hale house. Her house is still there, the present address being 1312 N. Dearborn Street. She lived at that address until 1896 and then moved to the nearby Plaza Apartment Hotel (Apartment No. 510) where Josephine Locke also lived, and where Swamiji spoke on several occasions. So, Harriet Monroe must have tried very hard not to hear him speak again, because she could have had plenty of opportunities to do so. But her sister Lucy, partly because of her duty as the Chicago correspondent of the New York magazine *Critic*, and partly because of her admiration for Swamiji, heard him on more than one occasion. When Harriet was the art critic for the *Chicago Tribune*, Lucy was working in the Art Department of the *Chicago Herald*. When an executive of the *Tribune* came to know that Harriet's sister was working for a competitor, she was asked to resign.

Ironically, the *Chicago Herald* closed their Art Department and Lucy wound up with a job with the new publishing firm Herbert Stone and Co.[42] Lucy Monroe's "The Chicago Letter", which appeared in the November 11, 1893 issue of the *Critic*, bears a glowing testimony of her personal regard for Swamiji. She writes:

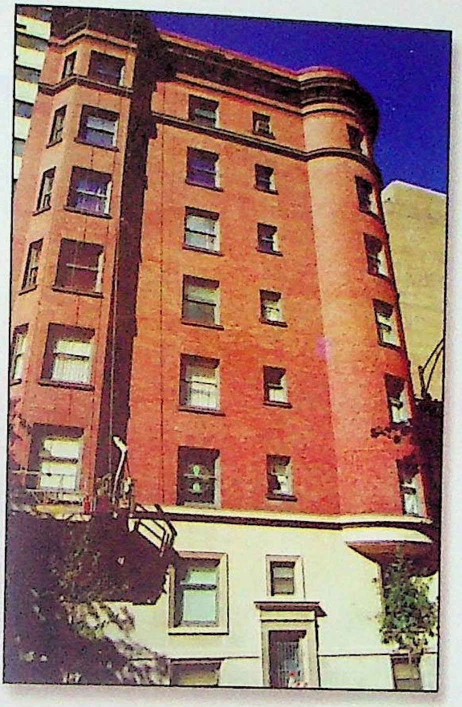
> His culture, his eloquence, and his fascinating personality have given us a new idea of Hindoo civilization. He is an interesting figure, his fine, intelligent, mobile face in its setting of yellows, and his deep musical voice prepossessing one at once in his favor....He speaks without notes, presenting his facts and his conclusions with the greatest art, the most convincing sincerity; and rising at times to a rich, inspiring eloquence.

With an observant sister like Lucy covering Swamiji's lectures, Harriet Monroe really didn't need to get out of the house to hear Swamiji's speeches. She could have savored the content listening to Lucy describing those at the dinner table. Referring to Swamiji's plan at that time Lucy writes—"His original purpose in coming to this country was to interest

Americans in the starting of new industries among the Hindoos, but he has abandoned this for the present..." This comment provides a timeline as to when Swamiji started thinking about giving up his idea of "salvation of the poor in India" with financial help from America. It is not too far fetched a presumption that Lucy Monroe might have caught a glimpse of the turban-clad monk in the horse-drawn buggy passing her house, came out and saw the monk getting down in front of the Hale house in the next block, walked over and asked him about his plans—is it?

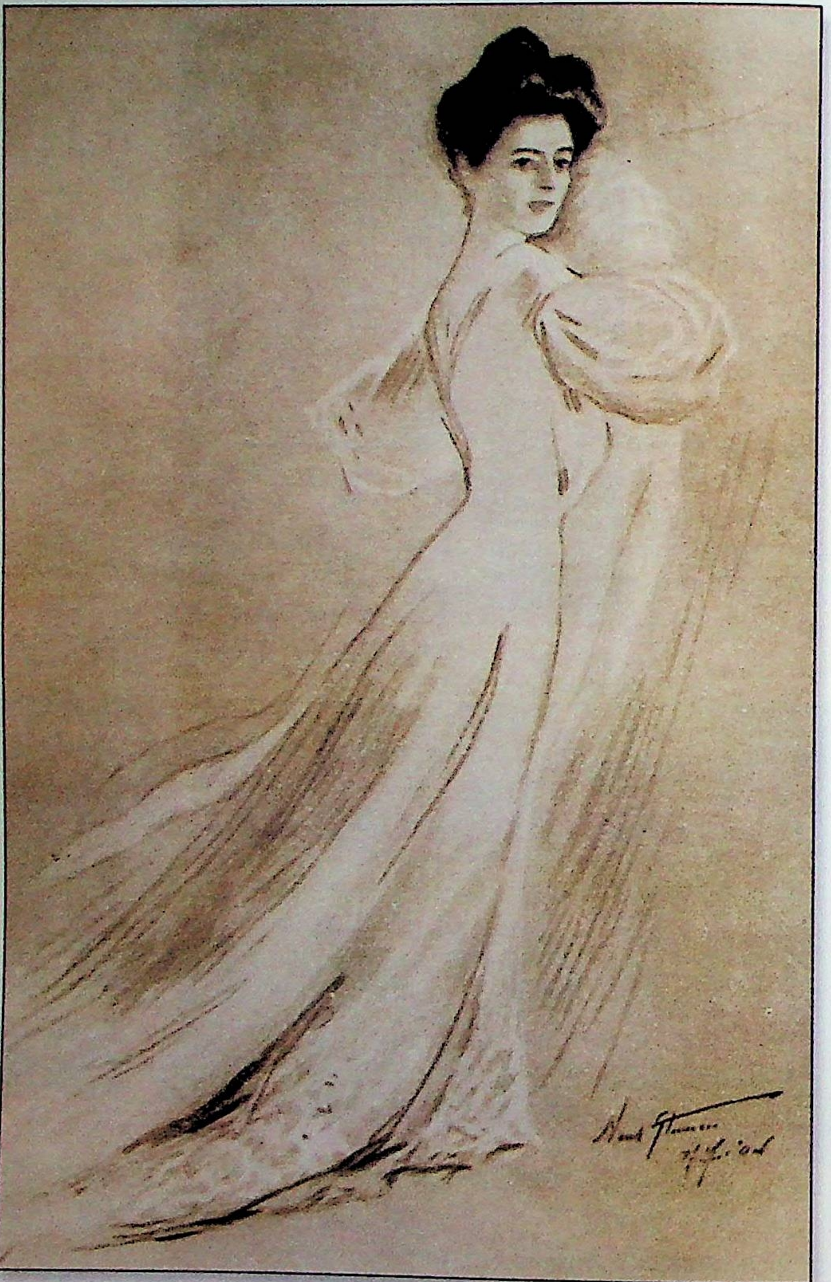
Swamiji left Chicago on January 17, 1895 for New York and didn't come back again until March 31, 1896. Most of this time was spent in the state of New York and England. Wherever he was he had stayed in constant touch with his family in Chicago through letters. This time he stayed in Chicago for ten days. At least part of the time, if not the entire time, Swamiji stayed as a guest of Dr. H. S. Perkins at 1628 Indiana Avenue.[43] Erskine Phelps used to live just across the street. Swamiji's adoptive parents were out of town, probably in Europe, where they had spent a considerable amount of time in 1896.

Dr. Perkins was a dentist, and also the director of the Chicago National College of Music. It was probably through Florence Adams that Swamiji came to know him. He also got some dental work done by the good doctor during this visit. The house is no longer there, being replaced first by a parking lot like several other building sites associated with Swamiji. Recently, a condominium complex has sprouted there. The main reasons for his Chicago visit this time were to hold classes and visit his sisters before sailing for England and eventually for India. Thanks to Florence Adams' letters we know a little more about this trip. The only information one gets about this trip from Swamiji's letters was in the one he wrote to Mrs. Bull—"I had beautiful visits with my friends and have already held several classes. I shall have a few more.... Everything has been well arranged here, thanks to the kindness of Miss [Mrs.] Adams. She is so, so good and kind. I am suffering from a slight fever the last two days; so I can't write a long letter."[44]



McConnell Building, 1210 N. Astor St.

Auditorium Theater



Florence James Adams

Based mainly on Florence Adams' letters Sister Gargi reconstructed Swamiji's visit to Chicago in the spring of 1896.[45] Swamiji, probably due to his illness and the pressure of twice-daily classes, did not write newsy letters this time. On the day of his arrival in Chicago he went to the Auditorium Theater in a surprise appearance and met many of his Chicago friends and admirers. One of them was Prince Wolkonsky from the Parliament days. The Lyons surely were there also. Of all the existing Chicago public buildings Swamiji had blessed with his presence, the Auditorium building ranks second only to the Art Institute, for he visited this institution numerous times for various reasons.

It seems Swamiji gave a talk on April 2 in front of a select audience in Mrs. Adams' studio in the Central Music Hall, and spoke at the house of Dr. Perkins the same night. Both he and Prince Wolkonsky spoke in her studio during the week of April 6. Swamiji probably had an intensive speaking engagement for the week, in Florence Adams' studio during the day, and at Dr. Perkins' house during the evening. If the size of the morning classes were big, Mrs. Adams would arrange to move to the Apollo Hall, also on the fifth floor of the same Central Music Hall at 69 State Street. Miss Josephine Locke again arranged some classes for him this time. But the main effort came from Florence Adams who had apologized to Mrs. Bull for not having any time to prepare the ground for Swamiji. But whatever she did in that short time, he definitely appreciated it. That was what really mattered.

In her letter to Mrs. Bull Mrs. Adams also mentions that she would like a Dr. John Hall and Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones to hear Swamiji speak. Dr. John Hall was a New York divine whose son Rev. Thomas C. Hall, a rather liberal Protestant, was the pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church at the corner of Rush and Superior. Rev. Jones, the Unitarian minister, was a major subject of discussion in a previous chapter. It is not known if Florence Adams was successful in bringing the two clergymen to hear Swamiji. In all probability she was not.

As mentioned earlier, Swamiji did not stay in his Dearborn Avenue home this time. The Hales must have rented out their house, or a part of it, in 1896, because the Chicago Directory shows both George W. Hale and an Albert M. Gilbert living at 541 Dearborn Avenue in 1896. The Hale and McKindley sisters had moved to their own apartment. According to the 1896 Chicago directory they lived at "The Majestic," an apartment building at 52-54 Walton Place. "The Majestic" was built in 1882 and torn down in 1942. This site is a parking lot now with the address 25 E. Walton Place. Swamiji must have visited his sisters in their apartment, and very likely made some recording of his voice on the wax cylinders of a phonograph machine. The information about making the recording was gathered in 1969 by Sister Gargi from Mrs. Herbert E. Hyde (nee Louise Baker), daughter of the third McKindley sister Mrs. Leonard Baker (nee Mary Esther McKindley). Mrs. Hyde, however, wasn't sure whether the event took place then or during his later visits. Mrs. Hyde was barely ten years old in 1896.[46]

Swamiji left Chicago for New York on April 10. Then winding up his first trip to the West he went to England towards the end of April, and from there went back to India. To a casual reader of his letters and various chronicles it would appear unusual for Swamiji to have left Chicago and this country and finally gone back to India without saying proper good-byes to his sisters, and especially his parents. The reason could be that he knew he would be back again. Even his early letters to his sisters from England did not give any indication that he would not see them for some time. Swamiji wrote to his sisters from England in May 1896—"Don't you know what I was thinking—about your mother! I just wrote her a letter and duly posted it to her, care of Monroe & Co., 7 Rue Scribe, Paris."[47] Mr. and Mrs. Hale were in Europe at that time, gone probably since late March. Swamiji did meet them later in Florence before starting his voyage to India. He probably said his good-byes to them then.

While in England, Swamiji was already thinking about his second trip to the West. He gave a clear indication of that in his letter to Josephine MacLeod from England where he said—"I just set things a-going a little in India and am off again for the ever beautiful U.S. and England etc."[48] He loved America and her people, and on the eve of his departure from England to India he wrote to Mary Hale:

> I have had two classes already—they will go on for four or five months and after that to India I go. But it is to Amerique—there where the heart is. I love the Yankee land. I like to see new things. I do not care a fig to loaf about old ruins and mope a life out about old histories and keep sighing about the ancients. I have too much vigour in my blood for that. In America is the place, the people, the opportunity for everything.[49]

After all, this "beautiful Yankee land" had given the penniless Hindu monk, notwithstanding some initial antagonism from a handful of jealous clergymen, recognition that the land of his birth had denied him. The call of Chicago had brought him to America; now after three years of planting the seeds of Vedanta in the very heart of the Western world Swamiji was going back to his homeland. He reached Colombo on January 15, 1897: India was ready to welcome her favorite son. The following poem summarizes the mood of that time as envisioned after one hundred years:[50]

You came back home whence the buffaloes roam,
In eighteen hundred and ninety-seven.
Mother India's shore was a dream no more,
You cherished it more than heaven.

Three years and a half were exceedingly rough,
While you worked on Western soil
You had sowed the seed of the Vedantic creed,
And waited for the fruit of your toil.
You emphasized the theme, that the Spirit Supreme

Is the essence of all being; in fact,
Life's only goal then is to manifest in men,
The concept of—"Thou art That".

Coconut trees, while swaying in breeze,
Bowed down to honor you and greet.
Rameswaram crowd was excited and proud,
As they lined up on both sides of the street.
Every person on the shore, from the king to the poor,
Was inspired by your success in the West.
Faces of the nation seemed to glow with all passion,
And the applause had heightened to the crest.
In the following days, you were showered with praise
By all the dignitaries of our land.
Your responses were clear, precise and sincere,
Reflecting your wisdom grand.
The towns you did pass, from Rameswaram to Madras,
Woke up listening to your hymn—
"To serve *Lord Shiva* one must start serving *Jiva;"*
And that was your messages' theme.

A hundred years seem like a nocturnal dream,
With you as my master and guide.
At the sanguine sunrise when I open my eyes,
I feel that you're still by my side.

CHAPTER 9

SECOND VISIT TO THE WEST

On arriving in India, Swamiji was welcomed as a national hero. The people of India had heard about the sensation he created in the West, defending the core values of Hinduism in the face of constant onslaught by the Christian missionaries. That, in turn, resulted in a vastly renewed interest among Indians in their own religion. He was unequivocally accepted "as the Prophet and Apostle of a re-interpreted and re-invigorated Hinduism."[1] During that time in South India when he was heralded as the Man of the Hour; when the Rajahs were considering it a privilege to draw his carriage; and when he was on the verge of returning to Calcutta, his hometown in the East; he still remembered Chicago as he wrote to Mary Hale—"Madras and Calcutta are on the tiptoe of expectation as if the whole nation is rising to honor me. So you see, Mary, I am on the very height of my destiny, yet the mind turns to quietness and peace, to the days we had in Chicago, of rest, of peace, and love."[2] Swamiji was still longing for those days at 541 Dearborn Avenue when he discussed his plans and experiences with the members of his family, or strolled in Lincoln Park looking at the blue Lake Michigan against the horizon, or spent some rare moments of peace and solitude away from the constant pressure of classes and lectures. He was missing his American family.

While in India Swamiji kept in touch with his adoptive family in Chicago through letters, although with a lesser frequency. He was busy organizing his mission in India, but he never forgot his close ones in Chicago. In March, 1898 he wrote to Mary Hale—"You have news of me already, I hope, through the letter I wrote to Mother Church. You are all so kind, the whole family, to me, I must have belonged to you in the past, as we Hindus say."[3] Swamiji had kept the Hales informed about his movements in India, but the lack of initiative was probably from the Hales' side. Because a year later he wrote to Mary again—"Thanks to Mrs. Adams [Florence Adams]; she roused you naughty girls to a letter at last. 'Out of sight out of mind'—as true in India as in America."[4] His American family could be guilty of not writing letters, but he wasn't.

What happened to that family during the years Swamiji was in India? Plenty! When he was moving from continent to continent, and then from province to province in India, the Hale family in Chicago was also moving from one residence to another. The first major event was Harriet's wedding. Harriet Hale married Clarence M. Woolley in early 1897. Mr. Woolley was associated with the American Radiator Company and lived in the Virginia Hotel, a private and rather high-priced hotel at the corner of Rush and Ohio Streets. After the wedding the couple moved to 10 Astor Street (Apartment No. 13). This Astor Street apartment complex, known as the McConnell Building, played a very significant role in capturing Swamiji's footprints in Chicago, as we shall see.

When the girls moved out of the Dearborn Avenue house to an apartment in 1896, George Hale did not feel the need for maintaining a large home. According to the Chicago Directory, Mr. and Mrs. Hale were the occupants of 541 Dearborn Avenue through 1896 and 1897 along with the Gilbert family. The Hales were traveling in Europe during a large part of this period. As mentioned earlier, George Hale probably rented out his house to Mr. Gilbert in 1896 or 1897, because starting in 1898 the Gilbert family became the sole residents of the house*. The existing information in the Swamiji chronicles indicates that the Hales moved from their Dearborn Avenue home to the Astor Street apartment. The Chicago Directory does not list George Hale as an occupant of the McConnell Building at 10 Astor Street, Apartment No. 10, until 1900. In 1899 there were a Mr. and Mrs. George M. Hine (or High) living there. It is very probable that the Hales did not move to the McConnell Building, where the Woolleys were already living since 1897, until the middle of 1899. So where were the Hales living during 1898 and part of 1899? The residents' list of Virginia Hotel showed a George W. Hale living there in 1898, and only that year. It is conceivable that, between leaving their home at 541 Dearborn Avenue and moving in to their apartment at 10 Astor Street, the Hales lived in the Virginia Hotel for a while. As a previous resident of the Virginia Hotel their son-in-law could have made the arrangements for them.

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*According to the Cook County Records of Deeds, Ellen Hale sold the house on April 2, 1900 to a Mary E. Forgan.

There were movements on the part of Swamiji's adoptive sisters as well. When he had left Chicago in April of 1896, all four of them lived on Walton Place. Harriet got married in the meantime. The directory shows Isabelle McKindley still living there in 1897, but there was no further mention of either Hale or McKindley sisters in relation to the Walton Place apartment building after that year. According to Mrs. Herbert Hyde, the Mckindley sisters moved from Walton Place to their apartment at 300 Schiller Street, and Mary moved in with her parents. That probably happened sometime during late 1897, or early 1898. It is possible that Mary had spent 1898 and a part of 1899 in Virginia Hotel with her parents. The Chicago Directory lists Harriet McKindley at 302 Schiller Street in 1898 and at 298 Schiller Street in 1899, but no Mary Hale. The present site addresses for those are respectively 41 and 39 E. Schiller Street. The buildings are long gone. These addresses were probably those of a row of connected buildings, like the ones on the north side of the street, No. 42 through 50, still existing from that era.

Swamiji had one wish left which he had expressed in a letter to Mary in July of 1897 from Almora—"How I wish I were in England to see Harriet. I have one wish left—to see you four sisters before I die, and that must happen." And that eventually happened.

> After consolidating his newly started activities in India, Swamiji strongly felt an urge to take a trip to the West to personally inspect how far the works founded in the foreign lands had progressed during his absence. Besides, the doctors, apprehending a sudden physical breakdown of the Swami due to the overstraining of his nerves in the midst of his whirlwind activities in India, had advised him to go on a sea-voyage to recoup his fast deteriorating health.[5]

Everything fell into place, and on June 20, 1899, Swamiji boarded the ship *Golconda* and left India for his second trip to the West. After spending the first two weeks of July in England, he reached New York on August 28. From there he went to Ridgely Manor, Mr. Francis Leggett's mansion at Stone Ridge, about 90 miles north of New York city. He spent there a restful summer, or what was left of it, and part of the fall. He had been there before, once in the spring and again in the winter of 1895 for a short time. But this time, in the cradle of the picturesque Catskill and Shawangunk mountains, he spent ten weeks of quiet, spiritual time with his intimate friends, disciples, brother-disciples, and well-wishers. Swamis Turiyananda and Abhedananda, and Sister Nivedita were with him this time. He also played golf there, probably the first and only time in his life.[6] If Chicago was Swamiji's principal home in the West, Stone Ridge definitely would rank next.

While in Stone Ridge, Swamiji kept in constant touch with his family in Chicago. He wrote several letters to the family members, assuring them of his constant love and affection. Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale—"By the by, Mary, it is curious your family, Mother Church and her clergy, both monastic and secular, have made more impression on me than any family I know of."[7] Although he suffered a bout of illness towards the end, he was physically and mentally prepared to plunge into his second mission to the West. "Get up some classes and I will come"—Swamiji had told Josephine MacLeod, Francis Leggett's wife Betty Leggett's sister, as she was leaving for California in early October to see her ailing brother.[8] It is doubtful that his trip to California was prompted by any classes arranged by Miss MacLeod. Like his going to Massachusetts in August of 1893 at the invitation of Kate Sanborn, going to California could also be a part of the divine master plan alluded to in the beginning of Chapter 4. Otherwise why on earth would he take a four-day, three thousand mile train ride to go to a place where he hardly knew anybody; but a place which, after only six months of work, became the citadel of his Vedanta movement in the West? This was his way of spreading his message from "coast to coast." Besides, Swamiji was probably aware of the cosmopolitan, adventurous, and liberal nature of the Californians and thought it would be an appropriate place to sow the seeds of Vedanta.

There was another less subtle reason for his trip to California, the one Swamiji expressed in a letter to Sister Christine on November 21—"Circumstances have so fallen that I have to start for California tomorrow. It is for my physical benefit too; as the doctor says, I had better be off where the severe winter of the North cannot reach."[9]

He left New York for California on November 22 and arrived in Chicago the next day. This time he stayed in the city for eight days. These were rather eventful days as chronicled by Sister Gargi and mentioned here.[10] He stayed with the Hales at their Astor Street apartment this time. According to the Chicago Directory of 1900 Mary Hale was also living there with her parents. As mentioned earlier, Harriet Woolley and her husband Clarence were occupants of the same building.

The McConnell Building is presently at 1210 North Astor Street. At the northwest corner of Astor and Division Streets, the house stands tall among the others around it. This marks the southernmost boundary of what is now the "Astor Street Historic District." Among all the houses in which Swamiji is known to have lived within the confines of the city of Chicago this is the only one that has withstood the passage of time. North Astor Street, just as it was during that time, is still a very prestigious place. It is located within the "Gold Coast" community of Chicago, an extremely desirable place to live. Built in 1897, and designed by Holabird and Roche, this seven-story (plus an English basement) building of steel and brick was the first of the modern fireproof structures of this type in Chicago. The same architects also designed the Hilton Towers standing on the site of the Lyon home. There were two apartments on each floor, one on the north side and one on the south, both accessed through a central public hall. Each apartment typically consisted of a library, family room, dining room, kitchen, two or three bedrooms, and a servant's bedroom.[11]

There is no available information showing how the apartments were numbered at that time. But whichever way one looks at it, Apartment No. 10 had to be on the fifth floor. The original floor plan shows the apartment on the north side being smaller, and having two bedrooms instead of three.[12] Having an unmarried daughter in the house and the need to have an extra bedroom for occasional guests must have prompted the Hales to opt for a three bedroom apartment. It is, therefore, probably safe to assume that the Hales rented the apartment on the south side of the fifth floor, the one on the right as one went up the stairs (now Apartment No. 5A).

George Hale's rental apartment on the fifth floor was a spacious place with all the modern amenities a wealthy person can ask for. Sitting in the circular library, with ample windows looking over Division Street, one could probably get a glimpse of the greenish-blue Lake Michigan. The sliding doors between the library, the reception room, and the dining room could be opened for big social events. Three bedrooms, a large bathroom, an oversize kitchen, and a servant's room completed the layout. There were halls thrown in here and there to relieve the monotony and provide means for common access. A similar apartment in that building would sell for no less than half a million dollars now. According to the president of the Owner's Association, who, incidentally, lives in the apartment where the Hales presumably lived, the building was converted from a rental apartment complex to individually-owned condominiums in 1973 or thereabout.

Sister Nivedita was also in Chicago then. She arrived about three weeks ahead of Swamiji, accompanied by Alberta Sturges, Francis Leggett's step-daughter, and Sara Bull's daughter Olea. The trio had been staying at the Auditorium Hotel initially, but after a few days the girls moved to the Hull-House and Sister Nivedita moved to a house at 112 Lincoln Park Boulevard. Although it was not very clear from Sister Nivedita's letters, Alberta and Olea seemed to have been involved in some kind of social work at the Hull-House. Around the time Swamiji arrived in Chicago, Sister Nivedita also moved to the Hull-House.[13] She was giving lectures around the Chicago area to raise money for women's educational work in India. Her diary provided some key information, based on which Sister Gargi recreated Swamiji's week-long visit during the Thanksgiving of 1899.

Mary Hale threw a party in Swamiji's honor the day after he arrived in Chicago. All of Swamiji's Chicago friends were there. There were Mrs. Milward Adams, Miss Josephine Locke, Mrs. Peake (actually from New York), Mr. and Mrs. John Lyon and their daughter Mrs. Conger, Miss. Grace Howe, Miss. Cora Stockham, Mrs. Anna W. Mills, and the Harberts from Evanston. Swamiji was no doubt pleased to see all his friends and well-wishers after a gap of over three years. Sister Nivedita was there too. Mr. Hale was not keeping good health this time, but probably participated in the get-together.

The Chicago Directory of 1894 lists Anna W. Mills as a Christian Scientist living at 508 W. Adams with her physician husband Dr. James P. Mills. Swamiji must have known the Mills family from his early Chicago days. A letter Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones wrote to a Mary Straub of Chicago on November 24, 1893 gives Swamiji's address as—"Care of Dr. James P. Mills, Suite 907 Marshall Field Building, Corner of Wabash Avenue and Washington Street."[14] This also shows that Rev. Jones was aware of Swamiji's whereabouts at that time, although it is not very clear why Dr. Mills' address was given out on November 24 when Swamiji left for Madison on November 20 for a lecture tour of the Midwest. The only rationale is that Dr. Mills was aware of Swamiji's trip schedule, or had access to that information from the Lecture Bureau located in the same block. Mrs. Mills was in Green Acre with Swamiji in the summer of 1894 when he wrote to the Hale sisters—"many of my old friends from Chicago are here. Mrs. Mills, Miss. Stockham, and several other ladies and gentlemen live in tents...by the river."[15]

Swamiji must have visited the Hull-House to see Alberta and seen Jane Addams there as well. In a letter to Betty Leggett Swamiji said "Miss Noble is doing very well here, and working her way out. I saw Alberta the other day. She is enjoying every minute of her stay here and is very happy. Miss Adams (Jane Adams), as ever is an angel."[16] Swamiji was talking about Jane Addams of the Hull-House, but spelled the name wrong. He no doubt knew Jane Addams well because, as mentioned earlier, she had invited Swamiji to speak at the Hull-House six years ago. Sister Nivedita came to visit him, from the Hull-House to the Hale House, asking him questions while preparing for her talk at the Hull-House on December 1 on "Indian Arts and Crafts." She wrote to Mary Hale—"But it is on Indian Arts and Crafts of which I know nothing, as I told them, so I am going to ask if I may come to you on Saturday evening and ask Swami some questions on the subject."[17]

On November 27, Swamiji gave a lecture at the Hale residence in the form of a parlor talk. While staying at the Hull-House Sister Nivedita came to know Ellen Gates Starr, co-founder of the Hull-House along with Jane Addams as mentioned in an earlier chapter. She begged Mary Hale to let her bring Miss Starr to the Hale residence to hear Swamiji's talk, but it seems that Swamiji had met Ellen Starr before and did not talk to her very kindly. From Sister Nivedita's letter it was not very clear exactly what happened, but her own words to Mary Hale were:

> ...she is beginning to be one of us, and is hungry to come. *Do* let me bring her! We can sit in a corner out of sight....The fun of it is in Miss Starr's case that Swami really hurt her in her own house and that all I said in excuse or explanation was that I knew he never made mistakes that that was best for her when it happened, and greater of him than suavity—for it showed his entire indifference to the opinion of the world. It was on this strong doctrine that she got over her little hurt![18]

Whether Sister Nivedita succeeded in bringing her is not known.

On November 28 opera singer Emma Calve came to see Swamiji. She was in town with the Metropolitan Opera Company for a show at the Auditorium Theater. He wrote to Betty Leggett on November 30—"Nothing new—except Madame Calve's visit. She is a great woman. I wish I saw more of her. It is a grand sight to see a giant pine struggling against a cyclone."[19] He was referring to her turbulent state of mind at the death of her daughter. Swamiji saw a lot more of Emma Calve in 1900 and his influence is evident from the following statement she made in later years:

> It is my good fortune and my joy to know a man who truly 'walked with God;' a noble being, a saint, a philosopher, and a true friend. His influence upon my spiritual life was profound. He opened up new horizons before me, enlarging and unifying my religious ideas and ideals; teaching me a broader understanding of truth. My soul will bear him eternal gratitude.[20]

On November 30, after having a hearty Thanksgiving dinner with turkey and all the trimmings, plus his favorite ice cream, Swamiji was ready to leave for California. The Hales had given him a large new trunk to pack all his books and belongings. Bidding farewell to his adoptive family and Sister Nivedita, he boarded "Santa Fe's crack *California Limited*" at Dearborn Station and left for Los Angeles. Josephine MacLeod was already there awaiting his arrival.

The next six months were extremely significant in Swamiji's life as he moved from southern to northern California, concentrating on transplanting Vedanta to the Pacific coast. He succeeded in founding Vedanta Centers in both San Francisco and Los Angeles.* Due to Swamiji's initial effort and the effort of other swamis in later years, California has the largest number of formal Vedanta establishments, nine in all in the form of centers and retreats.

On May 29, 1900 Swamiji boarded the Southern Pacific's *Overland Limited* in San Francisco at 4 p.m. and arrived in Chicago at 9.30 a.m. on June 2, a long journey for two full days and three nights.[21] The train came in at the Chicago & North Western Station at Kinzie and Wells, the home of the *Overland Limited*. George Hale had died of apoplexy on February 8, 1900. This time also he stayed with Mrs. Hale at her 10 Astor Street apartment. Mary Hale was also living with her mother at that time. Harriet Woolley was living in the same building with her husband Clarence. The McKindley sisters were living on Schiller Street.

Very little is known regarding his stay in Chicago this time. It is conceivable that he saw many of his old friends and, of course, the McKindley sisters. His sisters' Schiller Street apartment was only a short walk from 10 Astor Street. Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Woolley were probably in Paris then, and so were Mr. and Mrs. Milward Adams.[22] Swamiji knew he was leaving his American family and all his friends in the city forever. He loved them all so much that it must have wrenched his heart to leave them. In the final morning before his departure Mary Hale discovered Swamiji with a load of sadness on his mind. The bed was untouched, indicating that he had not slept during the night. He almost whispered—"Oh, it is so difficult to break human bonds."[23] Did Mary Hale see tears in Swamiji's eyes? She probably did. Swamiji had his own idea regarding the role of human attachment in a monk's life. When questioned about the presence of tears in his eyes after hearing the news of Balaram Bose's death, he said—"We are not dry monks. What! do you think that because a man is a sannyasi he has no heart!"[24]

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*The Society that Swamiji had tentatively founded in Los Angeles did not last long. The present Society was founded by Swami Prabhavananda around 1930.

Swamiji left his home and his family for the last time on June 6 and went to New York. He stayed in New York until July 26 and left for Paris with the Leggetts to attend the Congress of the History of Religions. He stayed in Europe for three and a half months and went back to India in late November.

Swamiji carried with him many precious memories from his two trips to America:

> …memory of sweet friendships, unflinching devotion, and warm appreciation; the memory of a society based on the ideals of equality, justice and freedom, where a man—in sad contrast with India—was given every opportunity to develop his highest potentialities; the memory of the refinement attained by many people in intellectual knowledge, human relationships, and artistic taste; the memory of the American mind, alert, inquisitive, daring, and receptive.[25]

Swamiji was in this mortal world only two years after he left his adoptive family in Chicago. Once in India, he continued his correspondence with them. It was mainly Mary Hale whom he wrote letters to, although he inquired about the rest of the family. He mentioned his deteriorating health in those letters, as well as the therapeutic value of receiving Mary's letters. He knew his time was getting shorter. In his last published letter to Mary Hale on August 27, 1901 Swamiji said—"I now do nothing, except trying to eat and sleep and nurse my body the rest of the time. Good-bye, dear Mary; hope we shall meet again somewhere in this life."[26] Mary Hale did not get that chance.

EPILOGUE

Driving north on Lakeshore Drive, you'll pass McCormick Place, Soldiers Field, and then the Field Museum. On your left, beyond Grant Park, you will see a wide red building with a beige top. Behind it the mighty Sears Tower, the tallest building in Chicago, hovers in the background. That red building is Hilton Towers on Michigan Avenue and Balbo, where John Lyon's house was in 1893. Cross Balbo and go a little further—you will see the old Auditorium Building on your left, and then the rear of the Art Institute before you come to Monroe. This time you will thank Aaron Montgomery Ward for an unobstructed view of all these buildings, for he was the one who had crusaded successfully to keep the lakefront free of all permanent structures. The view, however, is not so unobstructed during the summer months because of the abundance of foliage in Grant Park. These are all important landmarks associated with Swamiji in his hometown in the West.

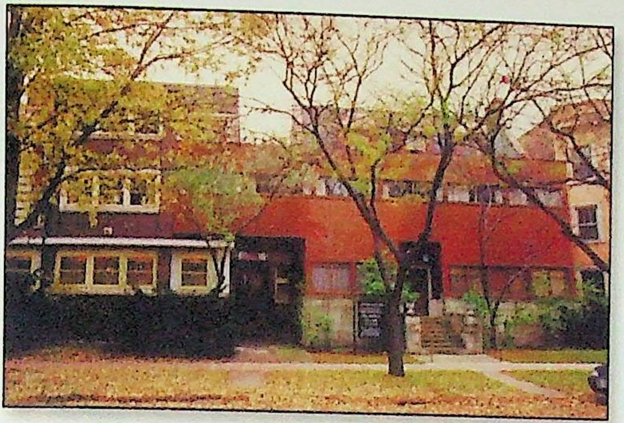
One of the major attractions of downtown Chicago is its lakefront. To a follower of Swamiji, that attraction is enhanced a thousandfold due to the presence of sites in the immediate vicinity that were intimately associated with the monk. Go another two miles north on Lakeshore Drive, take the North Avenue exit and turn left at the bottom of the ramp, and you are in the Lincoln Park area that is completely immersed in memories of Swamiji and his American family. One has to be very careful walking in this area. Because instead of following the footprints, now one is occupying them. You don't know whether to kiss the ground or walk on it.

Swamiji came to know rather quickly that although Chicago was his home, the Midwest was not the place where he could work his project out. He wrote to Mrs. Hale from Cambridge in December 1894—"But I have no other hopes in the west [west of New York, meaning the Midwest] nor will you advise me to destroy the only hope I have of success in these parts of the country by giving it up and going to Chicago to be idle as the day long."[1] All we know is that besides Florence Adams and Josephine Locke, the two principal figures that had arranged audiences for Swamiji in Chicago to spread his message, the widespread interest was just not there.

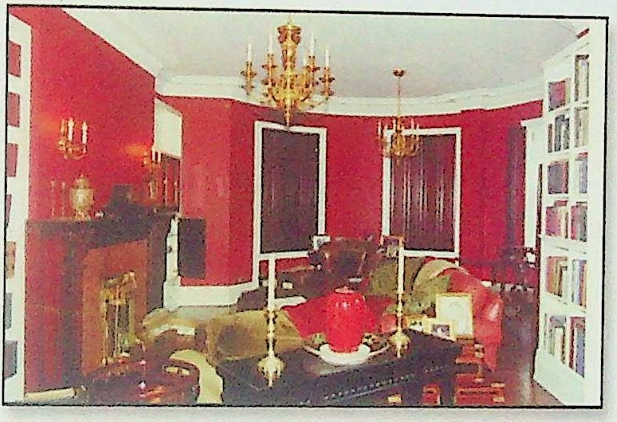
Why didn't Swamiji continue to enjoy in Chicago the press coverage and public attention that come naturally for a person of his stature? Why couldn't he capitalize on his success at the Parliament of Religions? The answer may lie in the religious, social, economic, and cultural undercurrents of Chicago at the time. Sister Gargi says:

> Swamiji had found an immense difference between the intellectual and religious climate of the generally orthodox and conservative Middle West and the liberal, fermenting East Coast; he had, indeed found in New York and Boston the natural centers for his work—centers where people eagerly listened to his ideas, some with intellectual interest only, perhaps, but others with a deeper need to absorb and understand the incalculably great gift he had brought to the West.[2]

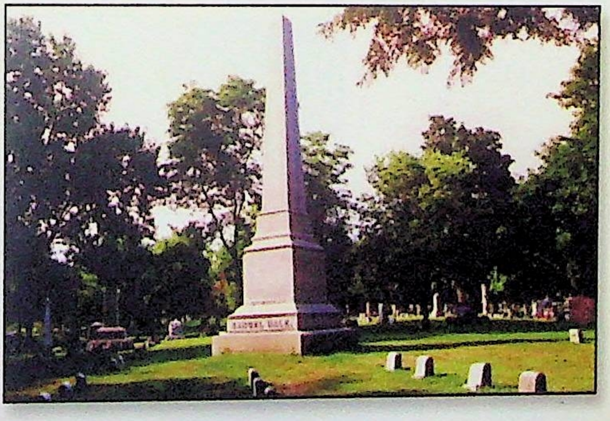
The general public in Chicago was more interested in the material advancement and earthly pleasures of a fast-growing economy. Even those who were able to rise above these impulses were more interested in cleansing the city, which had become a cesspool of vice and corruption, than in cleansing their soul. Chicago was on its way to "conquer the world" all right, but it didn't plan on doing that with spiritual armaments. In 1896, a British journalist named George W.



Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago



Library of the Apartment No. 5A, 1210 N. Astor Street



Kenosha Cemetery

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
(1863 - 1902)

Swami Vivekananda's statue at
Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago

Steevens described the contrasting facets of Chicago of the 1890s in a most sprightly manner:

> ...Chicago! Chicago, queen and guttersnipe of cities, cynosure and cesspool of the world! Not if I had a hundred tongues, every one shouting a different language in a different key, could I do justice to her splendid chaos. The most beautiful and the most squalid, girdled with a twofold zone of parks and slums…widely and generously planned with streets of twenty miles, where it is not safe to walk at night…the chosen seat of public spirit and municipal boodle, of cutthroat commerce and munificent patronage of art; the most American of American cities, and yet the most mongrel.…Where in all the world can words be found for this miracle of paradox and incongruity?[3]

Chicago was a schizophrenic city, not conducive to absorption in spiritual ideas. Swamiji had realized that rather quickly.

Swamiji himself was also under the influence of two opposing streams of thought. As a monk who had conquered the ego, it was natural for him to shun publicity. At the same time, he was perceptive enough to realize the power of the press to deliver large crowds at his lectures. That was also the natural way he could raise funds for his country. Though it could be said that he eventually abandoned this campaign, his plan to deliver his message remained intact. Swamiji wrote to Sara Bull:

> According to Manu*, collecting funds even for a good work is not good for a sannyasin, and I have begun to feel that the old sages were right.…I was in these childish ideas of doing this and doing that.…Perhaps these mad desires were necessary to bring me over to this country. I thank the Lord for the experience.[4]

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* The ancient lawgiver whose code is the basis of Hindu religious and social conduct.

It seems that the driving force, "Naren will teach" won handily over Swamiji's own plan of collecting American money for his program of uplift of the Indian masses.

William Stead mentioned religious intolerance as one of the five devils that ought to be cast out of Chicago. The other four were plutocracy, intemperance, gambling, and prostitution.[5] Religious intolerance is one devil Stead did not expect to find in a civilized and progressive country. But he was talking about religious intolerance among the Christians of Chicago, between Catholics and the rest. Even the Prophet from Nazareth could not find accord among his own followers. Under those circumstances it was especially unlikely that people would flock behind a Hindu monk, however impressive his utterances and clear his thought.

Hammond and Morrison mention seven cultural forces that have been driving the Americans since the birth of this country.[6] These are insistence on choice, pursuit of impossible dreams, obsession with big and more, impatience with time, acceptance of mistakes, urge to improvise and, finally, fixation with "whatsnew." All these were in action in the last decade of the nineteenth century when Chicago embarked on staging the World's Columbian Exposition. Swamiji's success in the U.S. can also be explained with the help of these forces. Swamiji gave Americans a taste of "whatsnew." For various reasons, America in the last decade of the nineteenth century was confronted with a spiritual crisis. The philosophic profundity and intellectual richness of Vedanta provided Americans, especially those who were looking beyond Christianity for spiritual fulfillment, with a new choice. Swamiji's success in the east coast and California was an endorsement of that.

The reason why Chicago failed to remain the central point of Swamiji's activities can also be explained through these cultural forces. In the last decade of the 19th century Chicagoans were mainly concerned with "pursuit of impossible dreams," meaning the pursuit of fame and fortune. As Stead had put it, people were here for one, and only one, purpose—

to make money, and more money. People would sooner follow in the footsteps of the "Chicago Trinity," namely, Marshall Field, Philip Armour, and George Pullman, than in those of a Hindu monk whose high spiritual ideals had not yet done his native country any good whatsoever in their eyes. After heralding his appearance and speeches in the Parliament Chicago denied this World Teacher a substantial following, and itself the opportunity to benefit from the association. New York, Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco, on the other hand, took full advantage of Swamiji's presence.

There is a saying in India—"The yogi does not get alms in his own village." Was that what happened to Swamiji in his hometown in the West? Would it not have been natural for him to found the first Vedanta Society in Chicago? But he did that in New York in 1894! Why? The causes were again the religious, social, economic, and cultural undercurrents. A Vedanta Society, or any Society for that matter, needs money and continued support; Swamiji received neither from the people of Chicago. New York provided him with both, in the person of Frank Leggett and so many others. Although he did spend some time holding classes during his visits to Chicago, it was only his love and gratitude for the Hales that brought him back to Chicago time and time again. It is unfortunate that he could not establish his base at home in Chicago, but it had to be in New York. Most of his followers, helpers and admirers were from places other than Chicago. Moreover, 1893 to 1899 was not a good time for Chicago. It had to sort out its own problems which New York had faced earlier and come through.

Not only did Chicago lose out to New York in the matter of launching the first Vedanta Society; so did his ancestral hometown. The Ramakrishna Mission was not organized in Calcutta until 1897. Swamiji probably had known all along what the popular song "New York, New York" expressed in the late 1970s, that "if I can make it there [meaning New York], I'd make it anywhere;" even Chicago.

It was not until 1930 that a Vedanta Society in Chicago was organized at 120 East Delaware Place by Swami Jnaneshwarananda, a disciple of Swamiji's monastic brother Swami Brahmananda. In his inaugural address on January 19, 1930 in the Masonic Temple at 32 W. Randoph, Swami Jnaneshwarananda said he came to start a Vedanta Center in the "city of his dreams," the city of Swami Vivekananda's great triumph. When Swami Jnaneshwarananda passed away suddenly in 1937 he was succeeded by Swami Vishwananda, who changed the name of the center to Vivekananda Vedanta Society. Finally, the Vedanta center in his hometown in the West became associated permanently with his name. It was Swami Vishwananda who, in 1955, purchased a building at 44 East Elm Street and ended the inconvenience of moving from one rented place to another. After the swami passed away in 1965 Swami Bhashyananda was appointed the swami-in-charge. With the assistance of Chester Carlson, the inventor of xerography, Swami Bhashyananda bought the present quarters at 5423 South Hyde Park Boulevard in 1965.[7] The Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago is just a few blocks north of the Museum of Science and Industry, the building that was a part of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition which Swamiji visited a number of times. Swami Chidananda came to assist Swami Bhashyananda in 1991 when the latter had become incapacitated due to several strokes, and in 1993 became the swami-in-charge.

Members of Swamiji's American family had died in various parts of the world; the last one to pass away was Harriet McKindley in San Diego, California in 1956. Swamiji's favorite sister Mary Hale Matteini had already died in Florence, Italy in 1933 (she had married Carlos Giuseppe Matteini in Italy four months after Swamiji's death). The Green Ridge Cemetery on 7th Avenue (southwest corner of 7th Avenue and 66th Street) in Kenosha, not far from the Hale homestead in that town, has all their graves marked with headstones. The Hale clan occupies one of the largest family plots in the cemetery. The soft green grass at the grave site, rejuvenated by the dew falling from the maple and oak trees overhead, lovingly blankets Swamiji's "Father Pope", "Mother Church", and brother and sisters. The obelisk on George Hale's grandfather Samuel Hale's grave stands tall in silent guard in the midst of the graves that include the Hales, McKindleys, Hydes, and other members of the clan.

After over 100 years from his first visit to Chicago, Swamiji's home in the West has honored the monk by installing a statue on "Vivekananda Hill" at the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago in Lemont, Illinois. It is actually not in Chicago, but in one of its southwest suburbs. This is consistent with the current trend of people moving from the city to the suburbs. Why should Swamiji be an exception? The statue was a gift from the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago. This is probably the first statue of Swamiji in the West outside the perimeter of any Vedanta Society. The ten-foot-two-inch tall bronze statue, sculpted by G. Paul and Sons. of Calcutta, is modeled after a photograph of Swamiji taken in Chicago after his appearance at the Parliament in 1893. On July 12, 1998, the statue was dedicated by Swami Atmasthananda, one of the the vice-presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. So far, it is only through this statue, the plaque at the Art Institute, the stretch of Michigan Avenue named the "Honorary Vivekananda Way," and the photograph in the Hull-House Museum that Swamiji's hometown has recognized the city's unusual former part-time resident. The Hull-House Museum is probably the only place in Chicago where a local institution has recognized Swamiji on its own, without any initiative from the Indian community, the consulate of India, or a Vedanta group.

Dust from Swamiji's lotus feet has immortalized Chicago. A million Al Capones and John Dillingers cannot obliterate that bliss; neither can the brutality of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, or the drug trade and the pointless murders around the infamous Cabrini Green, Robert Taylor Homes, and other

Chicago housing projects. Chicago had, and still has, a special something that people cannot ignore. There is much more to Chicago than thick-crust pizza, the clamor of the grain and livestock trading floor, the gorgeous lakefront, the unforgettable blues jazz, and the once incredible moves of Walter Payton on the football field and the superhuman flight of Michael Jordan towards the basketball hoop. Pearl S. Buck once said—"Chicago has survived and has maintained an incredibly rapid growth in spite of fires, scandals, corruption, and gang warfare. One feels an indomitable spirit there, an instinct for life."[8] Even the actress Sarah Bernhardt, an admirer of Swamiji, said—"I adore Chicago. It is the pulse of America."[9]

It is surprising that Swamiji and William Stead's paths never crossed when both were in Chicago about the same time towards the end of 1893. Or maybe they did, and we only have to find the evidence. These two men were alike in many respects. William Stead almost echoed what Swamiji used to say, that it is almost better to be at work in sin than doing nothing at all. Stead said—"Christ at the last day will not ask what we have said or thought about Him, neither will He ask us whether or not we belong to His Church. His test, and so far as can be ascertained from His teaching, the only test which He will apply, is whether or not we have ministered to the physical, social and moral necessities of our fellow man."[10] He also said—"A religion which has nothing to do with any human effort is not religion. For religion is the life of man going out of himself to unite itself to the life of other men so that they may all be one in Love, which is God."[11] Swamiji would have wholeheartedly concurred.

William Stead died April 15, 1912 when he went down with a luxury liner called *Titanic,* on his way to America. "He went down with great dignity.... A fellow passenger later described his behavior in assisting others, without care for himself, as demonstrating 'superhuman composure.'"[12] In 1893, William Stead had wondered what would happen if Christ came to Chicago. Little did he know that if it was not the Lord, at least his messenger, *nitya-siddha** and *Ishvarakoti** as Swamiji's master Sri Ramakrishna had often called him, went there in 1893 and blessed the city forever.

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* *Nitya-siddha* — one who is born perfect; *Ishvarkoti* — special messenger of God born on earth to fulfill a divine mission.

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS IN CHICAGO

1893

July 30	Swamiji arrives in Chicago from Vancouver; registers in a hotel.
July 31-August 12	Visits World's Fair almost every day; stays with the Phelps family for a short period of time.
August 13	Departs for Boston.
September 9	Arrives in Chicago from Saratoga Springs; spends night in a railroad yard.
September 10	Meets Mrs. George W. Hale and then Rev. John H. Barrows.
September 11	The Parliament of Religion starts and continues until September 27; gives his first address in the afternoon; attends reception at A. C. Bartlett's home in the evening.
September 12	Attends reception by Charles Bonney in the evening at the Art Institute.
September 14	Attends reception by Mrs. Potter Palmer in the evening at Jackson Park.
September 15	Speaks for the second time at the Parliament; narrates the story "Frog in the well" in the afternoon; Scientific Section meetings start.
September 16	Attends reception at E. W. Blatchford's home in the evening.

September 19	Delivers speech on "Hinduism" at the Parliament in the afternoon.
September 20	Speaks at the Parliament unscheduled on "Religion is not the crying need of India" during the evening session; chastises the Christian Missionaries.
September 22	At the Scientific Section meeting, speaks in the morning at the "Conference on Orthodox Hinduism and Vedanta Philosophy," and in the aftertoon at the "Conference on the Modern Religions of India;" speaks on "Women in Oriental Religion" at a special session.
September 23	Gives a follow-up speech at the "Conference on the Modern Religions of India" during the Scientific Section Session; speaks before a session of the Universal Religious Unity Congress.
September 24	Speaks at the Third Unitarian Church on the subject "Love of God."
September 25	Speaks on the "Essence of Hindu Religion" at the Scientific Section session in the afternoon.
September 26	Speaks at the Parliament on "Buddhism, the Fulfillment of Hinduism" during the evening session at the invitation of H. Dharmapala.
September 27	The Parliament of Religion ends; makes closing comments.
September 29(28?)	Attends a vegetarian dinner given in his honor by Elisha Gray in his Highland Park home.
September 30	Speaks at the First Congretational Church in Evanston on "Hindu Altruism."
October 3	Speaks at the First Congregational Church in Evanston on "Monism."

October 5	Delivers his third lecture, on "Reincarnation," at the house of Elizabeth Boynton Harbert in Evanston.
October 7	Departs for Streator, Illinois; speaks at the Plumb Opera House in Streator on "Religions and Customs of India;" spends night in Streator as guest of Col. Ralph Plumb.
October 8	Speaks at the Church of Good Will in Streator on "God—a Universal Ruler;" spends second night in Streator as guest of Col. Ralph Plumb.
October 9	Comes back to Chicago from Streator.
October (?)	Speaks at the Hull-House on "The Economic and Social Condition of India."
October 11-13	Probably attends part of the Humane Congress at the Art Institute (was scheduled to speak on the 12th but did not).
October 16-21(?)	Gives classes at Hinsdale Unitarian Church.
October 22	Speaks from the Hinsdale Unitarian Church pulpit.
October 27	Lectures at Ladies' Fortnightly Club in Hotel Richelieu.
November 7	Lectures at Masonic Temple on "Hindu Philosophy."
November 10	Lectures at Masonic Temple.
November 12	Lectures at the First Universalist Church in Englewood.
November (?)	Signs contract with Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau.
November 20	Departs for Madison.
December 10	Lectures at People's Church at McVicker's Theater, subject—"Divinity of Man."

1894

January 12	Departs for Memphis, Tennessee.

January 22	Arrives in Chicago from Memphis.
February 12	Departs for Detroit.
February 23	Gets release from Slayton Lyceum Bureau contract.
February 27	Lectures at the Memorial Hall in Valparaiso on "Customs of India."
March 1	Lectures in Cobb Hall University Chapel at University of Chicago on "Modern Schools of Hinduism."
March 9	Departs for Detroit.
March 24	Arrives in Chicago from New York; rests and relaxes during the entire stay at the Hale house.
June 27	Departs for New York.

1895

January 1	Arrives in Chicago from New York; probably attends the Parliament commemoration at the Auditorium Theater; probably stays with the Lyons for a while, and then in an independent flat for the rest of the time; gives almost daily classes at the Auditorium Hotel.
January 17	Gives a class at the Plaza Hotel; departs for New York.

1896

March 31	Arrives in Chicago from Boston; visits the Auditorium Theater; probably stays in Dr. Perkins' house during the entire time.
April 2	Speaks at Florence Adams' studio at Central Music Hall during the day; speaks in Dr. Perkins' house in the evening.
April 6 - April 9	Speaks at Florence Adams' studio.

April 10	Departs for New York.

1899

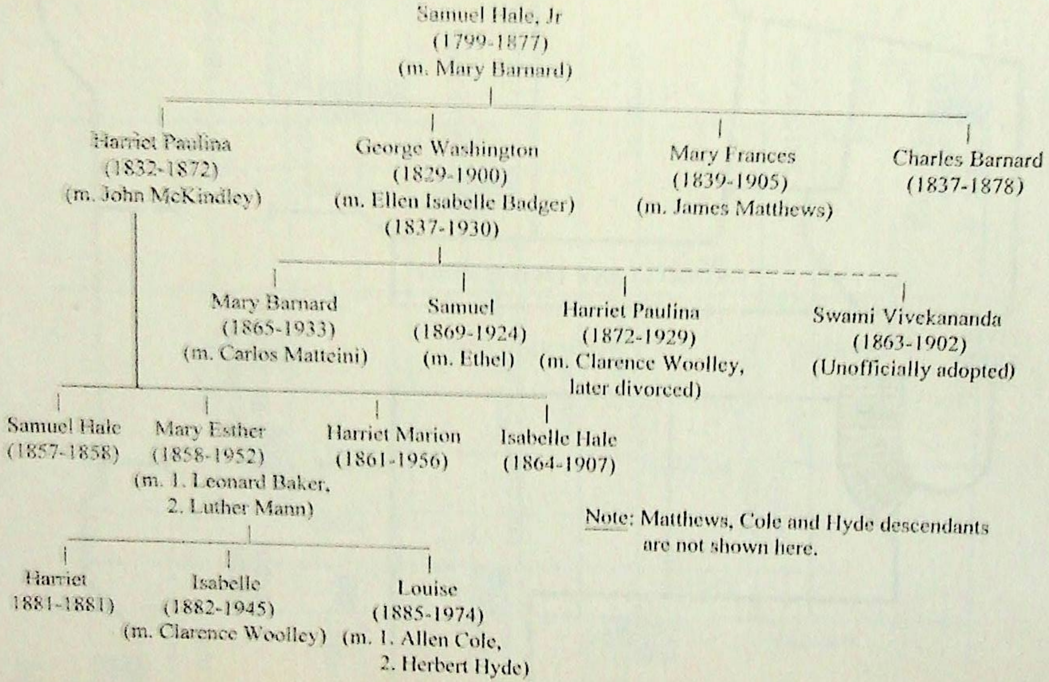
November 23	Arrives in Chicago from New York; stays with the Hales.
November 27	Lectures in the Hale apartment on Astor Street.
November 28	Meets with Madame Calve.
November 30	Departs for Los Angeles.

1900

June 2	Arrives in Chicago from San Francisco.
June 2 - 5	Stays with the Hales; visits old friends and members of his American family.
June 5	Departs for New York.

APPENDIX B

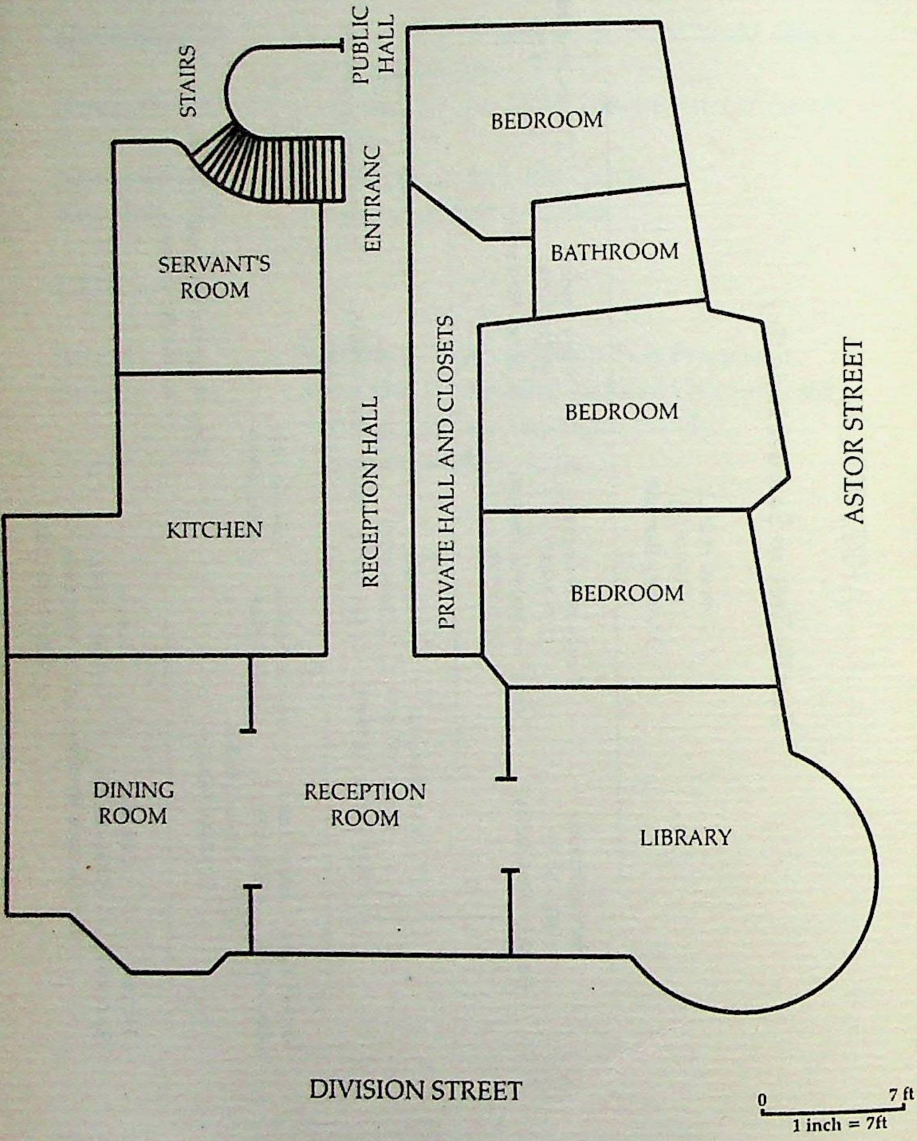
Family Tree of Samuel Hale (Jr.)


Samuel Hale, Jr
(1799-1877)
(m. Mary Barnard)
Harriet Paulina
(1832-1872)
(m. John McKindley)
George Washington
(1829-1900)
(m. Ellen Isabelle Badger)
(1837-1930)
Mary Frances
(1839-1905)
(m. James Matthews)
Charles Barnard
(1837-1878)
Mary Barnard
(1865-1933)
(m. Carlos Matteini)
Samuel
(1869-1924)
(m. Ethel)
Harriet Paulina
(1872-1929)
(m. Clarence Woolley,
later divorced)
Swami Vivekananda
(1863-1902)
(Unofficially adopted)
Samuel Hale
(1857-1858)
Mary Esther
(1858-1952)
(m. 1. Leonard Baker,
2. Luther Mann)
Harriet Marion
(1861-1956)
Isabelle Hale
(1864-1907)
Harriet
1881-1881)
Isabelle
(1882-1945)
(m. Clarence Woolley)
Louise
(1885-1974)
(m. 1. Allen Cole,
2. Herbert Hyde)

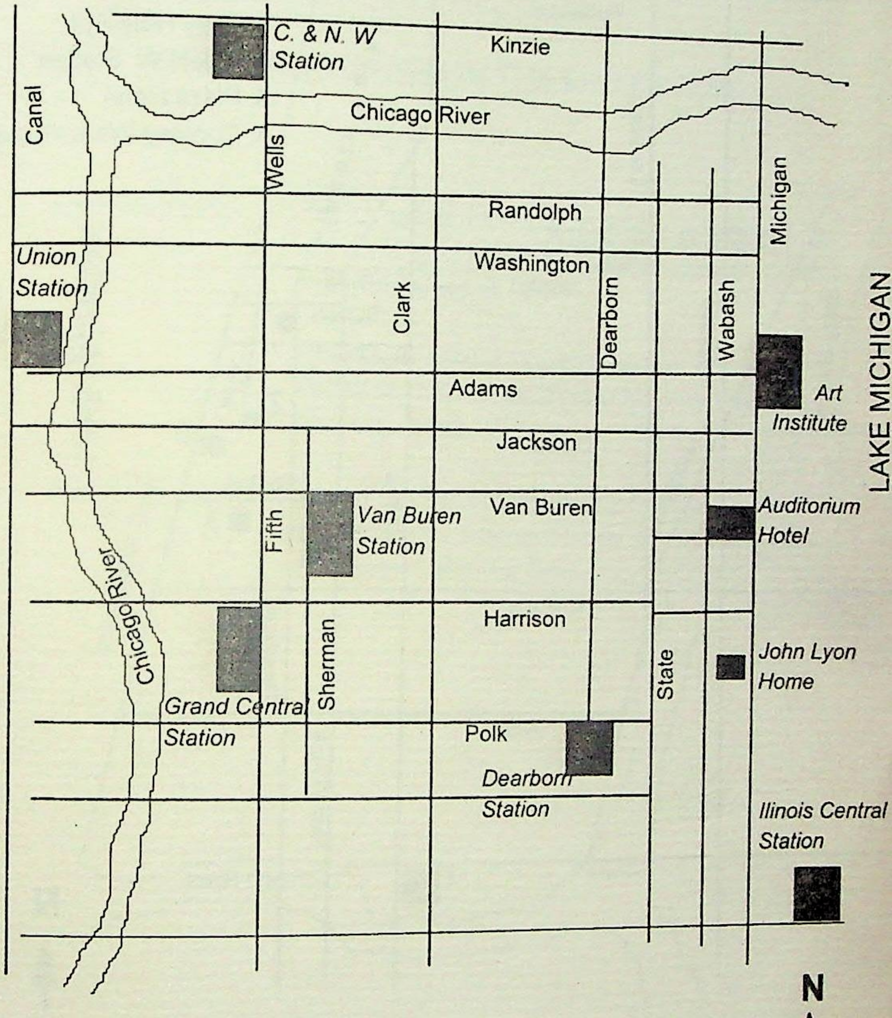
Note: Matthews, Cole and Hyde descendants are not shown here.

(Courtesy of Ms. Claire Head of Kenosha, Wisconin)

APPENDIX C

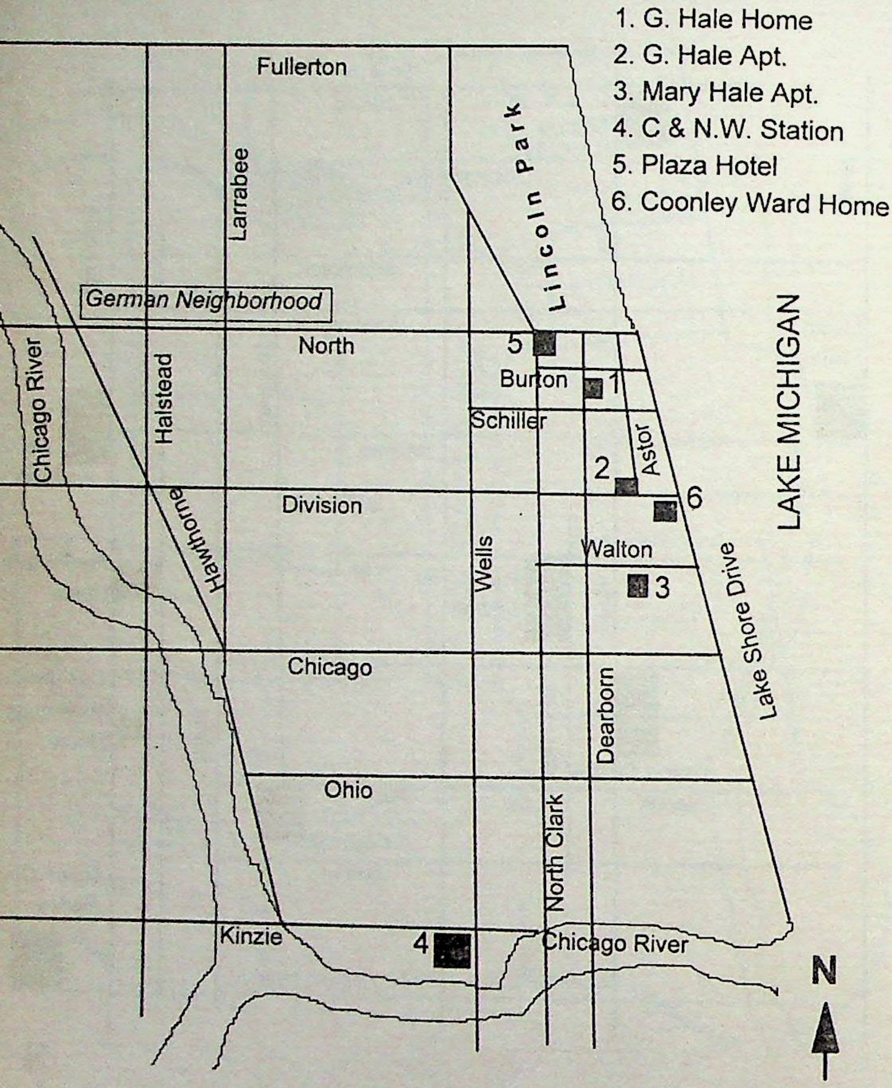

STAIRS
PUBLIC HALL
BEDROOM
ENTRANC
SERVANT'S ROOM
BATHROOM
PRIVATE HALL AND CLOSETS
BEDROOM
RECEPTION HALL
ASTOR STREET
KITCHEN
BEDROOM
DINING ROOM
RECEPTION ROOM
LIBRARY
DIVISION STREET
0
7 ft
1 inch = 7ft

APPENDIX D


C. & N. W Station
Kinzie
Canal
Chicago River
Wells
Randolph
Michigan
Union Station
Washington
Clark
Dearborn
Wabash
LAKE MICHIGAN
Adams
Art Institute
Jackson
Van Buren Station
Van Buren
Auditorium Hotel
Fifth
Chicago River
Harrison
Sherman
State
John Lyon Home
Grand Central Station
Polk
Dearborn Station
Ilinois Central Station
N

CHICAGO'S BUSINESS DISTRICT IN 1893

APPENDIX E


1. G. Hale Home
2. G. Hale Apt.
3. Mary Hale Apt.
4. C & N.W. Station
5. Plaza Hotel
6. Coonley Ward Home
Fullerton
Larrabee
Lincoln Park
German Neighborhood
North
Chicago River
Halstead
Burton
Schiller
Astor
Division
Hawthorne
Wells
Walton
LAKE MICHIGAN
Lake Shore Drive
Chicago
Dearborn
Ohio
North Clark
Kinzie
Chicago River
N
1
2
3
4
5
6

LAKEFRONT AREA NORTH OF CHICAGO RIVER IN 1893

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There cannot be enough books that dwell with painstaking accuracy, as does the excellent book by Asim Chaudhuri, on the details of so unique a life as Swamiji's. Chaudhuri has confined himself to examining the details of Swamiji's life during his appearance at the Parliament of Religions and his activities during the few months that came immediately thereafter, as well as during his later visits to Chicago.

— *Sister Gargi*
in her Foreword